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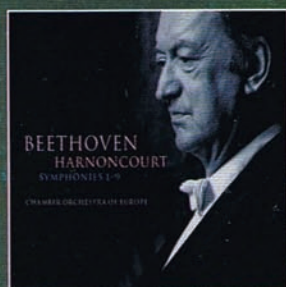
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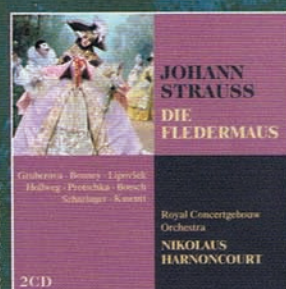
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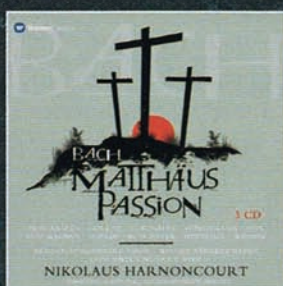
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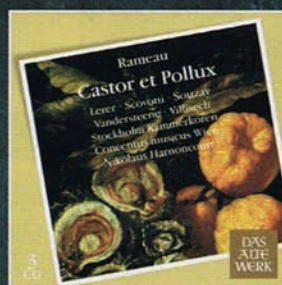
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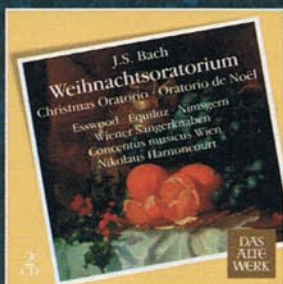
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October highlights from EMI and Virgin Classics



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SPOTLIGHT



Schubert Impromptus

David Fray

Following the release of his Bach concertos disc - a bestseller in France and Germany - the exciting French pianist David Fray continues to demonstrate his affinity with Austro-German repertoire as he turns to music of the early Romantic era for his third album with Virgin Classics; a programme of Schubert's six *Moments Musicaux* D780, the four *Impromptus* D899 and the *Allegretto in C minor* D915. Don't miss David Fray performing Schubert in recital at the Wigmore Hall on 14 December, and broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. www.frayschubert.com

"Fray is a rising star of the new classical celebrocracy, with his saturnine looks, his wild, romantic hair and his young actress wife all contributing to his profile. But his reputation is founded on talent" *The Independent*, November 2008

ALSO NEW THIS MONTH

Ingrid Fliter



Ingrid Fliter, described by Gramophone as "clearly born for Chopin," has recorded the complete waltzes in time for the composer's 200th birthday. Don't

miss Ingrid Fliter live at the Wigmore Hall, London on 16 December. www.ingridfliter.com

Natalie Dessay



A collection of the greatest 'mad scenes' in opera by Natalie Dessay; recognised as one of the world's greatest operatic character actresses.

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Renaud Capuçon



Renaud Capuçon presents two contrasting concertos, both performed with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Yannick Nézet-Séguin:

the Beethoven concerto and the feast of Hollywood-inspired romanticism by Korngold.

Max-Emanuel Cencic



Max-Emanuel Cencic returns to the core countertenor repertoire with a programme of Handel arias including two of the composer's 'greatest hits,'

Sopio notte from *Ariodante* and *Cara speme* from *Giulio Cesare*. www.cencic.net

Les Arts Florissants



Virgin Classics salutes the 30th anniversary of Les Arts Florissants with highlights from their extensive multi-award-winning discography for the label. LAF perform a series of concerts at the Barbican between 10 October and 26 November.

EMI - The Home of Opera



This great new series debuts with 20 titles including Callas in *Norma*, *Carmen*, *La traviata* and *Tosca*, Schwarzkopf in *Così fan tutte* and Klemperer conducting *Die Zauberflöte*. www.emiopera.com

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www.facebook.com/emivirginclassics

LETTERS 8

Meeting Hildegard Behrens

EDITOR'S CHOICE 12

The best new recordings of the month

SOUNDBITES

FOR THE RECORD 14

Riccardo Muti to lead Rome Opera;
Early Scottish music discovered

MY TOP 10 18

Contemporaries of the great Mr Handel

INTERVIEW 19

Pianist Lang Lang sets aside solo
virtuosics to record his first chamber disc

DIARY 21

Classical music and jazz can be perfect
partners, says pianist Jacques Loussier

PHILIP KENNICOTT 23

Mark Twain's famous Wagner
quip isn't as flippant as it sounds

SIMON CALLOW 24

Paying tribute to Leopold Stokowski
and 30 years of the Stokowski Society

THAT STRAIN AGAIN 26

A north London district unites rock and
classical music in complete harmony

THE GRAMOPHONE DEBATE 28

Are opera and musicals all that different?

ENCOUNTERS 32

Jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis helped
Nicola Benedetti to love her art

USA (North American edition only) A1

Not even a broken leg could keep
Joyce DiDonato from the stage

ONE TO WATCH 35

Dutch recorder-player Erik Bosgraaf

FEATURES

GRAMOPHONE AWARDS 2009 37

It's time again to honour the outstanding
recording achievements of the past year.
Gramophone announces the winners of the
world's most prestigious classical awards

THE COLLECTION 66

Rachmaninov's *The Bells* is both
nationalistic treatise and bleak warning

REVIEWS

ORCHESTRAL 74

Philippe Herreweghe's Beethoven
honours the composer's wishes; Czech
cello concertos from Jiří Barta

CHAMBER 88

Angela East is freely expressive
in a memorable Baroque recital

INSTRUMENTAL 94

Tabea Zimmermann's lovely tone makes
light work of rare Reger viola suites

INSTRUMENTAL ROUND-UP 101

Bellucci and Biret's Beethoven
projects go head to head

VOCAL 102

Northern Sinfonia's Britten premiere
recordings; Icelandic choral magic

OPERA 114

Fleming and Kaufmann triumph
in accomplished recitals

DVD 120

A Saint François to convert the uninitiated

REPLAY 122

Monteux and Mengelberg radio
broadcasts rediscovered

BOOKS 127

What makes a natural musician?

SOUNDWAVES

TUNE SURFING 128

Peer-to-peer music streaming and
the New York Phil's Mahler cycle

MUSICAL JOURNEYS

SEEN AND HEARD 131

Norway's extraordinary new opera house

LIVE MUSIC 135

Wigmore Hall celebrates Langridge's 70th

HIGH-FIDELITY

AUDIO AND VISUAL 136

FM radio faces an uncertain future

FINALE

MY MUSIC 154

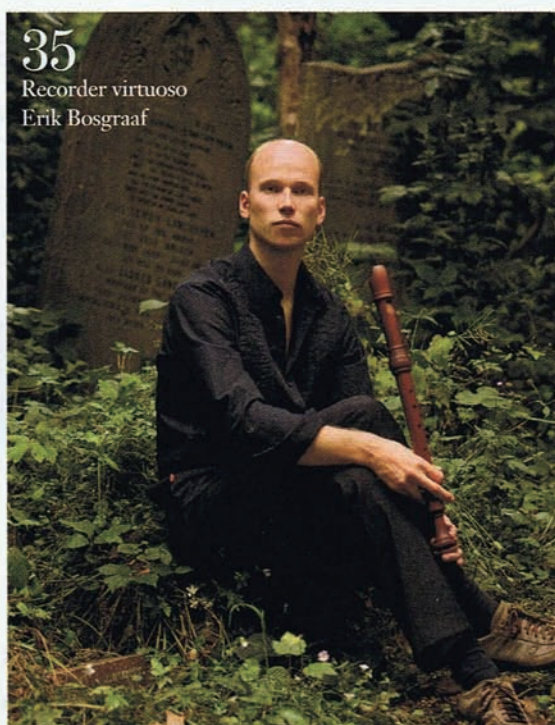
Award-winning singer-songwriter Sting

SUBSCRIPTIONS 30

CLASSIFIEDS 144

NEW RELEASES 149

REVIEWS INDEX 152



35

Recorder virtuoso
Erik Bosgraaf



19

Lang Lang
turns chamber
musician

28 Jerry Springer: controversial,
yes, but opera or musical?

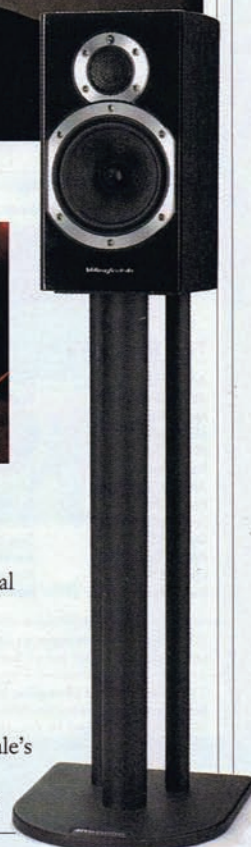


154

Sting on
his classical
choices

142

Wharfedale's
bargain
Diamond



GRAMOPHONE

Teddington Studios, Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9BE, United Kingdom
e-mail gramophone@haymarket.com website www.gramophone.net

EDITORIAL

Phone 020 8267 5136 Fax 020 8267 5844
e-mail gramophone@haymarket.com

EDITOR

James Inverne

DEPUTY EDITOR

Martin Cullingford / 020 8267 5044

REVIEWS EDITOR

James McCarthy / 020 8267 5125

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Antony Craig / 020 8267 5874

STAFF WRITER

Charlotte Smith / 020 8267 5155

SUB-EDITOR

David Thresher / 020 8267 5135

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Hayden Jones / 020 8267 5928

AUDIO EDITOR

Andrew Everard / 020 8267 5029

ART EDITOR

Charlotte Chandler / 020 8267 5091

PICTURE EDITOR

Sunita Sharma-Gibson / 020 8267 5861

EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING CO-ORDINATOR

Sue McWilliams / 020 8267 5136

GRAMOPHONE SECRETARY

Libby McPhee / 020 8267 5136

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 8267 5060 Fax 020 8267 5866
e-mail ashley.murison@haymarket.com

SALES MANAGER

Ashley Murison / 020 8267 5853

DISPLAY SALES EXECUTIVE

Melissa Guler / 020 8267 5130

DISPLAY SALES EXECUTIVE

Esther Zuke / 020 8267 5199

CLASSIFIED SALES EXECUTIVE

Peter Jones / 020 8267 5016

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Adam Fennell / 020 8267 5101

SENIOR PRODUCTION CONTROLLER

Suzanne Philbin / 020 8267 5909

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

08456 777823 (UK only)

+44 (0)1795 592980 (overseas)

gramophone@servicehelpline.co.uk

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THE REVIEWERS

Andrew Achenbach

John Allison

Nalen Anthoni

Mike Ashman

Philip Clark

Rob Cowan*

Jeremy Dibble

Peter Dickinson

Jed Distler

Duncan Druce

Adrian Edwards

Richard Fairman

David Fallows

David Fanning

Andrew Farach-Colton

Iain Fenlon

Fabrice Fitch

Jonathan

Freeman-Attwood

Edward Greenfield

David Gutman

Lindsay Kemp

Tess Knighton

Adrian Lamb

Richard Lawrence

Ivan March

PUBLISHING

Phone 020 8267 5136 Fax 020 8267 5844

PUBLISHER

Simon Temlett / 020 8267 5057

simon.temlett@haymarket.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

James Jolly

BRAND MANAGER

Rachael Butler / 020 8267 5182

LICENSING DIRECTOR

Tim Bulley / 020 8267 5078

tim.bulley@haymarket.com

GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER

Jane Emmas / 020 8267 5831

SENIOR DIRECT MARKETING EXECUTIVE

Lucy Harmer / lucy.harmer@haymarket.com

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DESIGN DIRECTOR

Paul Harpin

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Mel Nichols

SALES DIRECTOR

David Prasher

STRATEGY & PLANNING DIRECTOR

Bob McDowell

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Celebration

At about this time every year, I quietly wonder to myself whether, were I the sole judge, the Classic FM *Gramophone* Awards would look the same. But, you'll be pleased to hear, I'm not the sole judge, nor even one of the judges (except on the Record of the Year jury and of course I have the pleasure of bestowing the Editor's Choice award).

Which means that I have just as much fun as you do waiting for the results to come in and then rushing back to re-listen to some of the recordings I might perhaps have underestimated at the time, or simply to enjoy them again.

Yet again, it is a delight to say that this has been an amazing year for recordings. Perhaps an even stronger year than I noted in our last Awards issue (and that yielded a pretty dazzling array of discs). Survey the front-runners I had in mind for the Editor's Choice gong – Mariss Jansons and the Concertgebouw in world-beating form for Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé in *The Dream of Gerontius*, both Angela Gheorghiu in *Madama Butterfly* and Anna Netrebko (and the wondrous Elina Garanča) in *I Montecchi e i Capuleti*. Excellence wherever one turns.

So, if the *Gramophone* Awards are a taking of the classical music world's temperature, the patient is, artistically speaking, in rude health. As for this year's ceremony, which at the time of writing has yet to take place, can anything equal last year's highlights – which included several vintage musical comedy sketches on our big screen (I'm not sure I'll ever view Dame Sarah Walker in quite the same way again!), a wonderfully endearing speech from Artist of the Year Hilary Hahn and a priceless expression on the face of Paul Lewis on hearing he'd bagged Recording of the Year? This last, you will remember, was happily caught for posterity by our photographer and featured in last year's November issue (now of course viewable at www.gramophone.net for the delight of the pianist's fans, friends and family).

Well, this year's ceremony promises some special delights – more on those next issue – but the real and abiding magic is in the winning recordings themselves. Turn to page 37 to discover the winners and chase down those discs. You won't be disappointed. And if you are, there are dozens of runners-up to hear as well. As for me, as for whether my winners would all look the same, that's my game. Do you agree with them all yourself? That's yours.

James Inverne

james.inverne@haymarket.com

CONTRIBUTORS



French pianist and artistic director of the Aldeburgh Festival **PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD** has recorded to great critical acclaim with our Lifetime Achievement Award winner: he pays tribute on page 42.



Pianist and composer **JACQUES LOUSSIER**, celebrating his 75th birthday, reflects on his pioneering work in transcending the boundaries imposed by musical genre – and talks about the thrill of the Tour de France – in the *Gramophone* diary.



A busy month for *Gramophone* critic **DAVID VICKERS** saw our Handel expert celebrate 10 lesser-known contemporaries of the anniversary composer in the Top 10 and enjoy a Terradellas double-bill in the reviews section.

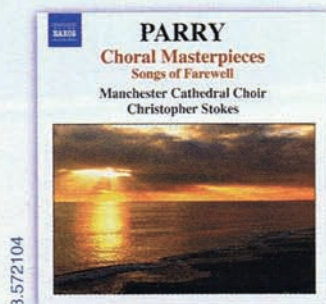
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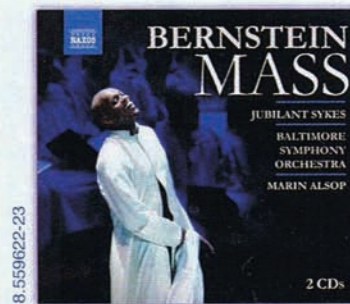
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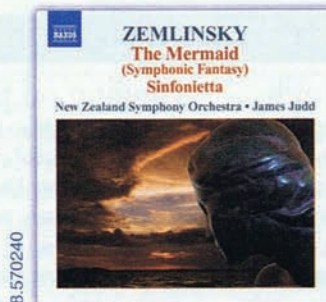


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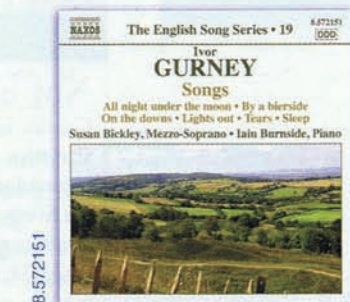


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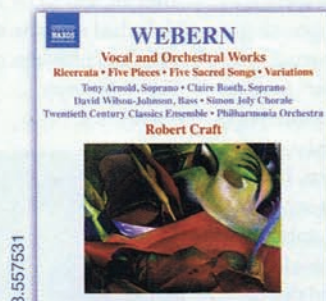


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The Financial Times



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The Times



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The Times

Letters

Letter of the month

Remembering Behrens

I first heard Hildegard Behrens in a *Ring* cycle at the Bayerische Staatsoper in 1991. The next day, in Vienna, I was walking in the Stephansplatz when I passed a lady, stopped in my tracks, backed up and looked at her right in the face. She nodded affirmatively with a gleam in her eyes. I introduced myself and we just stood there talking about opera and some of our mutual experiences for around half an hour. As I knew her birthday, I told her that I was born 11 days after her. She discussed being an Aquarian and my being on the cusp of Pisces. In 1993 I heard *Elektra* in Houston with Behrens in the title-part. After the performance I waited backstage at the end of the line of Miss Behrens's admirers. When they all cleared away, I was standing silently in the doorway. She looked at me intently, came close and moved her hand slowly in front of and around my head and said, "I am seeing water around you. The Fish." I was stunned and still said nothing. She said, "It was in Vienna on a cold day. You had on a grey coat and we talked about music in the Stephansplatz."

George S Weaver
Tallah, LA, USA

Hildegard Behrens:
fine memory



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Not on the beach

Geraint Lewis, reviewing the attractive *New Aldeburgh Anthology* (September, page 105), repeats the five-year-old clanger that only "cloth-eared golf players" object to Maggi Hambling's *Scallop*. At a town meeting soon after it was erected, 258 Aldeburgh residents called for it to be re-positioned (planning permission had originally been sought for a site within the town); only six voted to leave it on the North Beach. Very few contest the intrinsic beauty of the shell, whatever one may feel concerning the appropriateness of its quotation from the opera which refers to the despairing voices of apprentice boys whom Grimes has allowed to die while under his supervision. I should add that I was originally a supporter of the plan for Maggi Hambling to create a sculpture in memory of Britten. My objection, and that of many who live here, is to the placing of anything man-made on a beautiful stretch of beach which is designated as an outstanding site of natural beauty and scientific interest. The fact that the scallop is not mentioned in the *Anthology* suggests that its editors are of the same opinion.

Humphrey Burton
Aldeburgh, UK

Singing on pitch

Following on from the article "Playing on pitch" (September, page 26), the booklet-notes to CHAN8997 state that Holst's setting of Psalm 148 (included on the disc) was first performed "in an open air performance at St James's Park Football Ground, Newcastle-upon-Tyne" (in 1920). However, beyond that statement, no further information is given and I have often wondered what the occasion was which led to that first performance. After all, and so far as I am aware, Holst had no particular connection with the north east of England.

Clifford Occomore
Crawley, UK

In praise of dissent

Jeremy Nicholas's Top 10 "Wayward critical assaults" (September, page 17), detailing the "mistakes" of critics in their assessments of pieces or composers now generally regarded as great, is wholly misguided. So the opinions of these men do not agree with the modern-day canon – this individuality should be celebrated, not lampooned or stifled. How dull, indeed tragic, it would be if all critics, and all listeners of music, agreed about it! Dissent has now become so bold a thing as to be worthy of praise and when those who dare to disagree with the majority opinion are sneered

WRITE TO US AT

Gramophone
Teddington Studios
Broom Road
Teddington
Middlesex TW11 9BE, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 8267 5844
e-mail
gramophone@haymarket.com

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A Holst first at St James's Park



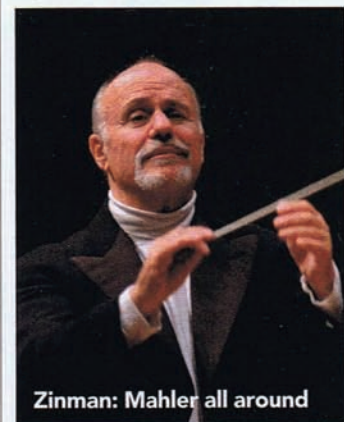
at in such a fashion, it is a sad day indeed.

James Potter
Oxford, UK

Super surround

May I offer words of both thanks and encouragement to Sony Music for the recent issue of newly-recorded SACDs of major orchestral repertoire? First came David Zinman's wonderful series of Mahler symphonies from Zürich. Then the splendid *Don Quixote* and *Heldenleben* from Fabio Luisi and the Dresden Staatskapelle. Most recently a veritable Bruckner deluge: the Fourth from Kent Nagano, the Seventh from Paavo Järvi and the Ninth from Luisi. All are significant performances, but it is the emulation of the recording venue in one's listening room that sets these issues apart. While the smaller labels continue to provide most of the new SACDs, it is gratifying to see one of the "majors" re-entering the field. More please! Now if EMI, Universal and Naxos would do likewise. And I do hope that reissues from these labels of historical multichannel recordings à la Pentatone RQR will occur. Imagine Martinon's superb Debussy and Ravel or the many gems from Ormandy, Bernstein and Monteux that could be ours in the rich ambience of multichannel sound. And with three recent recordings of Bernstein's *Mass*, we really should have the composer's version in its four-channel incarnation. If the owners of such material aren't able to issue them, perhaps Pentatone or Testament could find a way to accomplish it.

Radley M Smith
Ann Arbor, MI, USA



Zinman: Mahler all around

Grétry appreciated

Few of us who hold Sir Thomas Beecham in high esteem, and who have come to know Grétry's *opéra-comique Zémire et Azor* through his inimitable direction of its ballet music (EMI), will have realised that there is in existence a recording of him conducting the work in its entirety. Several years ago I had the good fortune to hear a tape of the Bath Festival performance given by Beecham on May 16, 1955, and broadcast at the time by the BBC. The carefully chosen all-French cast included Huguette Boulangeot as Zémire, Michel Sénéchal as Azor, Michel Lefort as Sander, Michel Hamel as Ali, and Arda Mandikian and Claire Duchesneau as Zémire's sisters. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra was in the pit.

There were a couple of short gaps on the tape but the sound was quite acceptable, and the performance itself distinguished by fine singing and by conducting as inspired as one would have expected. Soon after hearing the tape, I mentioned it to someone very closely acquainted with Beecham's recorded legacy, who stated that he himself possessed a complete copy. Apart from bringing the existence of this recording to the knowledge of a wider public, I would like to urge the Sir Thomas Beecham Trust, the BBC, and Shirley, Lady Beecham, to do their utmost to facilitate a release on CD. Admirers of Sir Thomas would be indebted to them for such a worthy tribute to his memory.

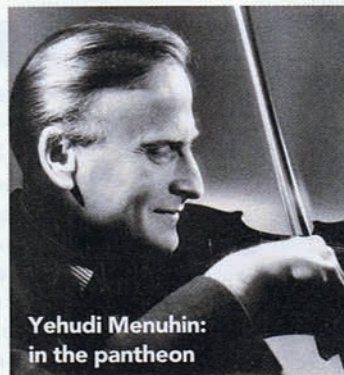
Richard Landau
via e-mail

Menuhin's golden age

Rob Cowan (Replay, October, page 122) asks which phase of Menuhin's career is the one to go for



Beecham: absorbing Azor



Yehudi Menuhin:
in the pantheon

on records, early-mid or mid-late, and I have to emphatically agree with Tully Potter: the mid-late was, for me, the finest. I first heard Menuhin live at the Royal Albert Hall in 1960 in the Beethoven Concerto (I believe his greatest achievement) and then in at least 50 concerts until I last saw him play the violin in 1991. I did hear him conduct several times after that but his conducting was never in the same league as his fiddle-playing. Before 1960, I have only heard his recordings but outstanding as these are, I would still opt for his latter period, especially the 1960s and '70s when, in my opinion, he was the supreme violinist of his time.

In his later years, even though his technique was often fallible, he seemed to reach depths of interpretation that few could have realised, especially in the Beethoven and Elgar Concertos, and those many such sublime moments will, for me, always place him at the top of the pantheon of "great" violinists.

Robin Self
Framlingham, Suffolk, UK

Yudina and Stalin

I am appalled at the reference to the late Maria Yudina as a "bag-lady" (Replay, September, page 103). This is the eminent pianist revered in Russia as a living saint; her outstanding musicianship earned the praise of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. A champion of modern music, she introduced works by Berg, Schoenberg, Messiaen and Stravinsky despite strict Soviet censorship. Converting to Christianity in her teens, she remained faithful to its precepts to the end of her life, ignoring the dangers this involved.

Her encounter with Stalin deserves telling in full. He had requested a record of a Mozart concerto he had heard her play



Maria Yudina:
no bag lady she

on the radio. This did not exist but a recording was manufactured overnight and given to Stalin. Yudina later received an envelope with a large amount of money from Kremlin. Her reply to him, the greatest dictator on earth, was as follows: "I thank you for your aid. I will pray for you day and night and ask the Lord to forgive your great sins before the people and the country...I gave the money to the church I attend." Some bag-lady!

Mr NS Jenkins
Hounslow, Middx, UK

With respect to Mr Jenkins, while Rob Cowan did use the flippant term "bag-lady" he also praised Maria Yudina to the skies, both for her courage and her playing.

Competition

Our August covermount competition asked you, in this year of particularly notable anniversaries, to find a link between six works. The excerpts you heard were Tito Gobbi singing "Quand'ero paggio" from Verdi's *Falstaff* (EMI); Glyndebourne's own Danielle de Niese as Cleopatra singing "Da tempeste" from Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (Decca); Jennifer Smith in the Plaint, "Oh let me weep", from Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (Archiv); Renée Fleming singing the Song to the Moon from Dvořák's *Rusalka* (Decca); Nina Stemme in the Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (EMI); and Joan Sutherland singing "Nel dolce incanto" in the Decca recording of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (actually, as the winner pointed out, a Maria Malibran interpolation rather than authentic Donizetti).

The link was that the operas featured were the six being performed at this summer's 75th anniversary Glyndebourne Festival. Congratulations to Peter Merry of Merstham, Surrey, who receives a dozen CDs.

Singers in harmony

Rather malicious, eh? ("As is quite well known, Schwarzkopf rather maliciously suggested to her husband that Callas sing the mezzo part [in Giulini's recording of Verdi's Requiem], thereby making the Greek soprano *secunda donna* to her *prima*" – Letters, October). "Quite well known" too. I admire these fine gradations of attributable malice and imputed knowledge, though if the motive for Schwarzkopf's alleged suggestion was such as Mr Pettitt suggests, I should think he could justifiably have dispensed with the adverb. And I'm not so sure that it's "quite well known" either, or indeed from such gossips (probably "rather malicious" too) that seem the likely sources whether it can properly be said to be "known" at all.

What we do know is that Schwarzkopf agreed to sing Liù (*secunda*) to Callas's Turandot (*prima*). What I personally know is that in the time I spent with Schwarzkopf I never heard her speak of Callas with anything other than admiration, respect and affection. As for Callas's reported "quip" ("If she can sing my repertoire, then I can sing hers"), the logic is poor. Who says that the mezzo part in Verdi's Requiem is secondary? It certainly wasn't in Schwarzkopf's way of thinking. For instance, was Jessye Norman taking a cut in status when she sang mezzo to Cheryl Studer's soprano in the *Missa solennis*? And is it not possible that Schwarzkopf was thinking of the benefit to the recording (her husband's) and even to the work? After all, it would have made quite a line-up, and the chances of the *prima* being upstaged by the *secunda* are also worth a thought.

John Steane
Coventry, UK

Editorial notes

We identified Alois Posch as the flautist on the Pentatone disc of Schubert's Variations on "Trockne Blumen", D802 (September, page 65). Posch is the double bassist; the flautist is Aldo Baerten.

Through a production error in the obituary of David Drew (October, page 8) we mistakenly cropped a photo to show Berthold Goldschmidt instead.



HILDEGARD BEHRENS Soprano

Born February 9, 1937; died August 18, 2009

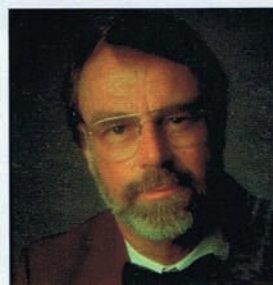
The German dramatic soprano Hildegard Behrens has died while in Japan to perform and give masterclasses at the Kusatsu International Music Academy and Festival.

Behrens was a celebrated Brünnhilde, Elektra and Salome. She studied law in Freiburg before turning her attentions to singing, and transferred to the Freiburg Academy of Music where she worked with Ines Leuwen. She made her operatic debut in Freiburg, appearing as the Countess in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1971; soon after she joined the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf. It was there, while rehearsing *Wozzeck*, that she was heard by Herbert von Karajan who, at the time, was casting a production of Richard Strauss's *Salome*. She appeared as Salome under Karajan at the 1977 Salzburg Festival and the subsequent EMI recording remains one of Karajan's and Behrens's most successful. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1976 as Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il tabarro*.

She took Brünnhilde into her repertoire, singing it at the Met, Bavarian State Opera, Vienna State Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin (her performance of the role is available on disc under Sawallisch for EMI and under Levine for DG). She also sang Isolde and recorded the role with Bernstein. Her extensive audio discography includes Leonore (live under Böhm for Orfeo and with Solti for Decca), Marie in *Wozzeck* (Abbado for DG) and Elektra (under Layer for Naïve and Ozawa for Philips), and she recorded the Dyer's Wife on Solti's *Gramophone* Award-winning set of Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Behrens's video catalogue is extensive and includes Brünnhilde (Met and Bavarian State Opera), Tosca (Met), Elettra in *Idomeneo* (Met), Elektra (Met) and Marie in *Wozzeck* (Vienna State Opera). **James Jolly**

ERICH KUNZEL Conductor

Born March 21, 1935; died September 1, 2009



If Arthur Fiedler was the king of pops conductors, Erich Kunzel rightly earned the title "Prince of Pops". For more than three decades he presided over the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, touring the world and making 85 recordings for the Telarc label.

He studied with Pierre Monteux and often conducted orchestras in core repertoire but became admired for performances of lighter works ranging from Viennese waltzes, Sousa marches and movie music to Broadway scores. Kunzel was the consummate showman who was as comfortable shaping music by Copland and Ellington as he was schmoozing with audiences. He did so not just with the Cincinnati Pops, which he founded in 1977, but also with orchestras around the United States.

New York-born Kunzel studied at Dartmouth, Harvard and Brown. He made his professional conducting debut in 1957 in Santa Fe and become assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony in 1965. The same year, he took over Cincinnati's Eight O'Clock Pops series, the first winter subscription pops series in America. Upon his founding of the Cincinnati Pops, Kunzel began amassing a remarkable series of stylish, exuberant recordings and performances with such legendary artists as Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck and Mel Tormé.

Kunzel is survived by his wife of 44 years, Brunhilde, with whom he spent non-pops hours at their home, Camelot, on Maine's Swan Island. **Donald Rosenberg**

GEOFFREY TOZER Pianist

Born November 5, 1954; died August 21, 2009



The Australian pianist Geoffrey Tozer became the youngest Leeds International Competition semi-finalist at 14 and made his Proms debut the following year. He toured widely in Europe, the US and China where in 2001 he became the first Westerner to perform the *Yellow River Concerto* in public. An inspired improviser from a young age, he often concluded recitals with extemporisations on themes and styles requested by his audiences.

Geoffrey Peter Bede Hawshaw Tozer was born in Mussoorie in India, moving to Australia with his mother in 1959. His major breakthrough resulted from his post at Canberra's School of Music where one of his pupils was Peter Keating, son of the future Australian Prime Minister, who was scandalised that Australia's leading pianist lived on a paltry salary, and who brought Tozer to the attention of Chandos Records, for which label he recorded a range of repertoire including pioneering discs of the piano music of Medtner. He also edited Medtner's piano sonatas for publication and created the vocal score of Minoru Miki's opera *An Actor's Revenge*.

In 1996-97 Tozer's mother and his manager, Reuben Fineburg, both died, blows from which he never really recovered. His death in Melbourne, from liver failure, was described by Keating as "a national tragedy" and by composer Peter Sculthorpe, who knew him for many years, "an enormous loss". Tozer never married. **Guy Rickards**

Next month

PADMORE
& LEWIS

Tenor Mark Padmore and pianist Paul Lewis are two British musicians at the height of their powers. As they come together to perform and record Schubert's tragic song-cycle *Winterreise*, Richard Wigmore talks to them about the collaboration.

Yo-Yo Ma is one of the pre-eminent cellists of today. Natalie Clein, who was inspired and influenced by his example, interviews him for us.

Also in the November issue:

- Bryce Morrison chooses the finest recording of Fauré's haunting piano Nocturnes
- We review Bryn Terfel's new disc "Bad Boys"



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Editor's Choice



James Inverne's pick of this month's outstanding new discs – you can hear excerpts on the CD free with this issue



THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL CD FEATURE

TRACKS

1-20 THE CLASSIC FM GRAMOPHONE AWARDS

Listen to extracts from each of the 15 recording category winners, including the Record of the Year, and hear music from the recipients of the Editor's Choice, Artist and Young Artist of the Year, Label of the Year, Special Achievement and Lifetime Achievement Awards.



TRACK 21 'SACRED HEARTS + SACRED MUSIC'

Musica Secreta
Divine Art

Get the book, get the CD. Yes, in what is either a clever marketing idea or a genuine effort to provide a multi-dimensional artistic experience, this disc is the official soundtrack to Sarah Dunant's book *Sacred Hearts*. Palestrina is placed alongside Rore and a sense of scholarship as well as intense musicality runs through the whole: fascinating and lovely.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 113

REISSUE OF THE MONTH



And so, so soon, we begin to approach the end of Haydn year. When we look back at the riches and the rarities these 12 months will have unearthed, this is one of the sets that may well rise above the pack. Beautiful and energetic performances of Haydn's overtures make an appealing collection, well packaged in this reissue from BIS of the mid-Nineties set from the Haydn Sinfonietta. Delightful.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 79



TRACK 22 BACH. REGER

Solo Suites
Tabea Zimmermann *vi*
Myrios
There have been quite a few fine viola recitals lately, but this latest from Tabea Zimmermann shows some of her younger colleagues to what they can aspire. For here is playing full of warmth, of depth, of meditation and of full maturity. Her playing is never over-emphatic but it has both breadth and suppleness. A quite gorgeous disc.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 95



TRACK 23 'MELODIA'

Carmina Chamber Choir / Árni Heimir Ingólfsson
Smekkleysa
I love these kinds of recordings. Last year one of the great surprises was an album of Swedish choral music and now along comes this collection from Iceland's musical heritage. The interesting thing is the music's relationship to European medieval music, while still retaining its own distinctive flavour. It's all clearly second nature for the Carmina Chamber Choir.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 107



TRACK 24 'GERMAN ARIAS'

Jonas Kaufmann *ten*
Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Claudio Abbado
Decca
For all his much-admired forays into Italian and French repertoire, the newest star tenor is on home ground here. But, ever versatile, German arias for Kaufmann means Mozart as well as Wagner. Vocally more at home now in the latter than the former, these are all immensely skilful, nuanced performances. Kaufmann reminds us once again that he is an artist as much as a crowd-pleaser.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 117



TRACK 25 VIVALDI

'The French Connection'
La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler *vn*
Avie
Who thinks of Vivaldi as part of the French school? He was, in a way and just in passing, but in a clever and intriguing programme La Serenissima focus on works that the composer contributed to the French music scene. When it comes down to it, though, and despite the interesting premise, this is at heart a lovely disc of marvellous and unusual Vivaldi fare.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 86



TRACK 26 'VERISMO'
Renée Fleming *sop*
Milan Symphony
Orchestra / Marco Armiliato
Decca

This is something of an unexpected treasure, because the last thing one expects from a luxury star vehicle is a journey of real discovery. But that's what Fleming delivers, less creamy of voice than of yore but the more interesting for it. Many of the arias here are real rarities and the soprano brings to them intelligence as well as beauty.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 115



TRACK 27 FOERSTER.
MARTINŮ.
NOVÁK
Cello Concertos
Jiří Barta *vc* Prague
Philharmonia / Jakub Hruša
Supraphon

That the leading Czech label Supraphon delivers yet another winner of a disc of Czech music should come as no surprise. Here the label's latest young star conductor, Jakub Hruša, joins with the cellist Jiří Barta for superb, adroit performances of these concertos. Atmospheric and entirely absorbing.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 78



TRACK 28 TERRADELLAS
Artaserse
Anna Maria
Panzarella *sop* Real Compañía
Opera de Cámara /
Juan Bautista Otero
RCOC Records

Sometimes musical excavation leaves you wondering why they bothered, but sometimes – as here – a real gem is uncovered. Terradellas was a household name in his day, the early to mid-1700s, but is very far from that now. And yet this operatic thriller reveals a great innovator and a superb musical dramatist. It's also a terrific performance.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 119



DVD OF THE MONTH

This is the big one, as far as lovers of under-appreciated operas are concerned (well, one of them anyway). Messiaen's huge *Saint François d'Assise* has yet to receive a full professional production in the UK, but its champions will find much to confirm its status here. Rodney Gilfry and Co deliver vivid, committed performances, while Ingo Metzger's conducting leaves no room for doubt.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 120



ALSO ON THIS MONTH'S CD

Find out which recording of Rachmaninov's *The Bells* is Geoffrey Norris's favourite
►COLLECTION PAGE 66

PLUS Enter our competition. Identify the musical excerpts and say what links them – for a chance to win a dozen CDs



TRACK 29 BEETHOVEN
Symphonies
Nos 2 & 6, 'Pastoral'
Royal Flemish Philharmonic /
Philippe Herreweghe
Pentatone

One of the most cerebral of conductors, Philippe Herreweghe always guarantees an intelligent approach and that's in evidence again here. He keeps to Beethoven's metronome markings, strictly obeying the letter of the score. Not that this results in any diminution of power: quite the opposite. As so often, from discipline comes interpretative freedom.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 77

TRACK 30 BRITTEN
'Unknown Britten'
Sandrine Piau *sop*
Northern Sinfonia / Thomas Zehetmair
NMC

When I interviewed her recently, Sandrine Piau demonstrated a fair bit of nervousness about this release. About how a Baroque specialist would be received in Britten, about taking on competitors, including her adored Felicity Lott, and not least about the ethics of the entire enterprise. For this isn't *Les illuminations* business as usual. The ever-enterprising NMC label has uncovered three songs that Britten decided against including in his cycle and Colin Matthews has orchestrated them.

She need not have worried, for what we get is what Andrew Farach-Colton in his review hails as

'Piau's performance has guts as well as grace...a brave foray into the unheard'



one of the finest soprano versions on disc. Bringing all the ethereal beauty one would expect from a Baroque soprano, Piau's performance has guts as well as grace. There is savagery here in the shadows. In both the song-cycle and the other rarities, Thomas Zehetmair and his Northern Sinfonia are on startling form, alive to the spiky contrasts and shifting moods. Piau signed on for this project with NMC because she regards them as a "laboratory for music, with an ongoing vision". This brave foray into the unheard stays true to that vision.

►REVIEWED ON PAGE 105

CD of the month

Soundbites

Muti to lead Rome Opera

Riccardo Muti is to head the Opera di Roma from December 2010, following an agreement reached with the mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno.

Under the arrangement Muti will conduct two opera productions per year as well as concerts. The Rome position is intended to be a principal role for Muti, alongside his work as musical director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Muti, 68, stepped down as musical director of La Scala, Milan, a position he held for almost 20 years, in the spring of 2005 following an acrimonious dispute involving the theatre's general manager, musicians and unions. While La Scala has made overtures



to woo Muti back over the last four years, it was the Rome house which succeeded in persuading the conductor to accept a full-time post, one which has already raised comment on possible competition between Milan and Rome.

According to one Rome-based critic, Sandro Cappelletto of *La Stampa*, the conductor's "artistic approach which puts quality first" should shake "the mediocre temptations often predominant at the Teatro dell'Opera," provided, that is, he is "supported by a capable general management and artistic direction".

Muti's tenure will include already scheduled performances of *Idomeneo* and *Nabucco*, before he adds his own stamp to the company's output.

There has also been talk of building up the orchestra and of redeveloping the theatre.

Early Scottish music discovered



A Stirling Head reveals its secret early harp music

Scotland's Stirling Castle has yielded an unlikely musical discovery. Possibly the oldest surviving example of written Scottish instrumental music has been identified on the border of one of the Stirling Heads – carved wooden roundels used to decorate the ceiling of the royal palace.

It is thought the series of 16th-century notations in the form of Os, Is and IIs might have been played on harps, viols, fiddles and lutes. The markings would provide a guiding sequence of chords as the basis for improvisation.

"This discovery is potentially of great significance to our understanding of medieval and Renaissance instrumental music – the normally 'unwritten' practice of the elite court professional," said Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Dance lecturer Barnaby Brown. "Very little notation survives from these dynasties of players because complex instrumental music was transmitted orally." Despite this, examples of similar notation have been found in Wales, and Scotland itself has provided earlier examples of written music composed for choir.

Plans are currently under way to perform the music for the first time in centuries. "These numerals provide an exciting opportunity to explore what instrumental music may have sounded like at Scotland's royal palace around 1540," said Brown.



To mark the 20th anniversary of **Nigel Kennedy's** *Four Seasons* recording, EMI released a special anniversary edition on September 7. The album created a media frenzy when released in 1989. Not only did it top the classical chart for over a year, but it crossed the threshold into the pop chart as well, reaching number three, and went on to enter *The Guinness Book of Records* as the best-selling classical recording.



A Glyndebourne performance of Dvořák's *Rusalka* very nearly turned into a catastrophe when soprano **Ana María Martínez** became tangled in some netting as the first act drew to a close and plunged backwards into the cello section. During the interval, understudy Natasha Jouhl was upgraded from First Nymph to the lead and her own understudy rushed down from London. Martínez returned for the next performance.

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Baltimore SO / Alsop *Naxos*
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Monteverdi Choir, EBS / Gardiner *SDG*
- 4 (New) Hubay Violin Concs Nos 1 and 2**
Chloë Hanslip, BSO / Mogrelia *Naxos*
- 5 (New) Schmidt Symphony No 2**
Malmö SO / Sinaisky *Naxos*
- 6 (New) Brahms Symphony No 3**
ORR / Gardiner *SDG*
- 7 (New) Tchaikovsky Syms Nos 1 and 6**
LPO / Jurowski *LPO*
- 8 (14) Handel Organ Concertos, Vol 7**
AAM / Egarr *Harmonia Mundi*
- 9 (5) Debussy, Ravel Music for two pfs**
Vladimir and Vovka Ashkenazy *Decca*
- 10 (11) Bruckner Syms Nos 3 and 4**
Royal Concertgebouw / Jansons *RCO Live*

► Chart for week ending September 5, 2009 (previous week's position in brackets). For weekly charts, visit www.gramophone.co.uk © The Official Charts Company 2009

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Arabella STEINBACHER

The violinist discusses her new disc of Berg and Beethoven-

These two concertos have a special significance for you.

Yes, these recordings are very special to me, not only because of my love for the repertoire but as a memorial to my father – he was a pianist and we would always rehearse together. I have played these works in concert many times so my father and I spent a lot of time working through them. He was still alive when the recordings were made but he passed away recently so it was very important for me to dedicate the CD to his memory.

Do you see this recording as a requiem for your father?

I do, very much, and I also like to think of it as a requiem for Berg: he died before he could hear the Concerto premiered and the story behind the piece – composed “to the memory of an angel”, which is essentially a requiem for the daughter of Alma Mahler – gives it a unique, mystical quality. The Concerto sounds like it's not from this world, the beginning is so atmospheric. From the first moment I heard it, the piece has always gripped me. That's why I thought it would be a good idea to combine it with the Beethoven – they are very different pieces but there are still many similarities.

**The Berg Violin Concerto is a very intense piece – it must be quite a challenge to play.**

It is not a concerto that you are able to play every day – I mean, you wouldn't want to play a requiem every day, so really you have to put yourself in the right frame of mind and let go completely – you have to detach and free yourself in order to let the music flow. I think I would find it very difficult to take the piece on tour because you need to play it with all your emotions, everything you have. In that way it is very different to other 20th-century violin concertos. But working with Andris Nelsons is wonderful; I'm always completely relaxed with him. We've played together quite a few times and we instinctively feel the same way musically so our ideas develop naturally while we play – there is little need to discuss it.

Arabella Steinbacher's Berg and Beethoven concertos are reviewed on page 74

TAKING NOTE

The Times

“When Beethoven wrote his heaven-storming Ninth Symphony he cannot have imagined that the *Ode to Joy* would one day be played by an ensemble of 1000 ukuleles.” The Proms event led by the eight-person Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain had “hoped to attract about 200 players”, but in fact “the gathering surpassed the world record for the largest ukulele ensemble”. BBC Radio 3 presenter Verity Sharp said: “I thought that 1000 of anything would be a racket, but they're such small, soft instruments.” <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/>

French conductor **Emmanuel Villaume** is the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra's new chief conductor. His first season – the orchestra's 60th anniversary – will include Mahler's Fifth Symphony, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Villaume, who has completed nine seasons as music director at the Spoleto Festival USA, will increase his commitments in Bratislava over the coming years.

Star Tribune, Minneapolis

The Minnesota Orchestra has cut back on its quota of guest stars “to save money”, according to Claude Peck in the *Star Tribune*. “Big-name guests” announced last year, including James Conlon, Robert Spano and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, “have been cancelled, and replacement concerts announced... It's not unheard of, but ‘it's a little extraordinary’ for the orchestra to change its season to trim expenses,” said orchestra public relations director Gwen Pappas. Still the orchestra has “not heard any protests yet,” she said. www.startribune.com



Russian conductor **Gennady Rozhdestvensky** was recently named principal guest conductor of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, following his debut appearance with the orchestra in May as part of the Reykjavik Arts Festival. The conductor is scheduled to direct the orchestra in a series of four concerts in 2011. Two of these will take place in the Reykjavik Concert Hall, due to open in May of that year.

The Scotsman

It was with “cruel irony” that an Usher Hall Edinburgh International Festival performance was plunged into darkness “just days after a £25m makeover was unveiled”. The concert was delayed “by almost half an hour of ‘endarkment’” when the stage lighting failed as Joyce DiDonato was performing. After two attempts to rectify the problem the audience was informed a blown fuse was to blame. “Conductor Sir Roger Norrington entertained the full house of 2300 with a few wisecracks.” <http://news.scotsman.com>



Gallery view {Meet ENO's Claudia}

They call her Claudia. No, she's not a character in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* but the set, and as such she's a pivotal figure in more ways than one. According to reports, Claudia is not only enormous (she measures some seven metres in height, 12 in width), she is mechanised. Which means the fibreglass model crawls across the stage and can spin 360 degrees.

Something spectacular was expected from the innovative Catalan theatre company La Fura dels Baus for their visit to English National Opera and they have delivered in spades. Whether Ligeti's all-too-rarely performed masterpiece is given the production it has so long cried out for

will be known by the time this issue hits the news-stands.

But the production does at least seem to belong to a long tradition, for a time somewhat dormant, of spectacular stagings. During the David Pountney-Peter Jonas-Mark Elder regime the London Coliseum was effectively nicknamed "The Powerhouse", referring to a large extent to the vibrant productions pouring on to the stage.

And vibrant, in days gone by, often meant size and spectacle as well as intelligence. Back in 1972 the stage had been filled with enormous sets and flooded with extras for Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. In terms of scale, few who were there will forget the

tank a decade later which at the end of Wagner's *Rienzi* burst through the back of the set. And a 1981 *Flying Dutchman* gave the cursed protagonist a towering vessel which moved to tower over Daland's boat. More recently, director Stephen Pimlott and designer Stefanos Lazaridis filled the auditorium with runways for, among others, Nabucco's troops for the 2000/01 season.

Big isn't necessarily beautiful and there have been plenty of productions at ENO which made more modest but equally compelling claims on the attention. But looking again at the monstrous form of Claudia, there's no doubt that it's something that demands to be seen.



BERND UHLIG, ERWIN OLAF, SCHIRMER, MARCO BORGGREVE

The inaugural Johannes Vermeer Award, a state prize for arts in the Netherlands, has honoured **Pierre Audi**, artistic director of the Netherlands Opera and the Holland Festival. The Award is open to individuals in all fields of the arts, living and working in the Netherlands, and includes prize money of €100,000 to be spent by the winner on an original artistic project.



The Berliner Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall has proven a great success, attracting more than 200,000 users and 2000 season pass holders since its virtual opening in December last year. Now, all concerts from the 2009-10 season will be available as they are performed and on demand thereafter at: www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/dch



GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Tabea ZIMMERMANN

The viola-player talks about her disc of Bach and Reger



little known. In fact, Reger wrote beautiful solo suites for violin, viola and cello, which are all technically highly demanding while also being wonderfully lyrical and emotive.

What links Bach and Reger?

Reger often borrowed forms and structures from Bach. He takes the structures and then fills them with a Romantic sound world and sensibility. For instance, in the First Suite Reger uses an "echo" technique that he borrowed from Bach's Second Sonata for violin. Although there are structural similarities, I approach the performance of Bach and Reger very differently. When I am playing Bach I try to focus on the clarity of the musical line and in the Reger I focus on producing a rich, expressive, singing tone.

Tabea Zimmermann's Bach and Reger disc is reviewed on page 95

The Bach Suites are commonly thought of as cello works. What do you think the viola brings to the music?

These suites have been core viola repertoire for centuries. This music is very idiomatically written for the viola, perhaps even more naturally suited to the viola than the cello. The latest research suggests that Bach probably wrote these suites for an instrument called the violoncello da spalla, which was slightly larger than a viola and was played on the shoulder but sounded an octave lower. I rarely perform them in concert and, in general, I prefer the intimacy of the recording studio for this music. I really loved the process of producing a solo disc, the intimacy, just me and the viola. Performing these suites in a concert hall would require a totally different approach: in front of an audience projection is more important than introspection.

What drew you to the Reger Suites?

I've played the Reger Suites for many years, although (as with the Bach suites) rarely in the concert hall. Reger is still regarded by many as simply a composer of large orchestral pieces and so this music for solo strings is relatively

CAUGHT IN THE .NET



The quiz that sends you hunting for musical treasures in Gramophone's archive website - www.gramophone.net - for the chance to win a selection of discs.

In this month's Collection (page 66) we survey Rachmaninov's masterly choral symphony *The Bells*. It's hardly surprising that Russian performers relished the score's superhuman demands and Evgeny Svetlanov, one of the work's strongest advocates, was no exception. By the late 1960s Svetlanov had become a regular visitor to London so Gramophone sent Alan Blyth to find out more about the distinguished Soviet conductor for our March 1970 issue. It was interesting to note that two of Svetlanov's favourite pastimes were football and cycling. So here is the question: what did he like to do "wherever he can find water"?

Send your answers by e-mail to archivequiz@haymarket.com (please type Awards 2009 in subject line); please include your name, address and contact telephone number. The closing date is November 17.

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Online music hub **DilettanteMusic.com** is searching for a composer "who can embody the spirit of the Digital Age". Musicians from around the world have applied to be the site's first year-long digital composer-in-residence by submitting their works to a judging panel which includes Jennifer Higdon and Jonathan Nott. Works by the three finalists will be posted on the Dilettante site, and the winner chosen by public vote.



DILETTANTE

The Elias Quartet: new on New Generations

BBC New Generation Artists announced

Soon to be household names, the musicians joining BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme from September have been announced. Benefiting from the two-year programme of broadcast and performance opportunities are Georgian pianist Khatia Buniatishvili, Italian pianist Francesco Piemontesi, Swedish soprano Malin Christensson, Dutch baritone Henk Neven, the British Elias Quartet and the German Atos Trio.

The scheme celebrated its 10th birthday this year with a Proms bank holiday weekend of events dedicated to chamber music featuring past and present New Generation Artists. During the past decade more than 70 young international musicians have taken part in the programme, including pianist Paul Lewis, mezzo-soprano Alice Coote, bass-baritone Christopher Maltman, violinist Janine Jansen, soprano Aylish Tynan and trumpeter Alison Balsom.

Bayreuth signs deal with Opus Arte

Royal Opera House production company Opus Arte has struck a long-term media deal with Wagner's renowned Bayreuth Festival.

The first DVD recording, to be released in November, is Christoph Marthaler's production of *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted by Peter Schneider. Performed at the festival this summer, the production stars Robert Dean Smith as Tristan and Irène Theorin as Isolde. Released simultaneously is a CD recording of the complete *Ring* cycle conducted by Christian Thielemann in 2008. The 14-disc set stars Michelle Breedt, Albert Dohmen, Stephen Gould, Hans-Peter König, Linda Watson and Eva-Maria Westbroek.

The **Richard Hickox Foundation** is launched on October 15 with a special Barbican concert featuring the City of London Sinfonia, London Symphony Chorus and mezzo Felicity Palmer. The Foundation aims to promote British music, a particular concern of the late conductor, by commissioning recordings of British composers, supporting young conductors and singers through grants and fellowships, and encouraging the performance of British music outside the UK.

MY TOP 10

HANDEL'S CONTEMPORARIES

Much though he loves Handel, **DAVID VICKERS** argues that we have not yet done justice to many of his contemporaries (Bach, Vivaldi and Rameau not included). In the interest of fairness, his list is strictly alphabetical

5 REINHARD KEISER (1674-1739)
Born near Weissenfels, not far from Handel's native city of Halle, Keiser was the finest German dramatic composer when the young Handel worked for him in Hamburg. His operas *Claudius*, *Nebucadnezar* and *Octavia* deserve our interest, not least if we judge from Handel's frequent borrowing of ideas from them.

8 NICOLA ANTONIO PORPORA (1686-1768)
Eminent singing teacher (he taught Farinelli) and opera composer. During the mid-1730s he wrote a succession of ambitious works for Handel's competitors, the Opera of the Nobility: *Polifemo* and *David e Bersabea* both merit revivals.



1 ATTILIO ARIOSTI (1666-1729)
This Bolognese composer, ordained a priest, apparently received papal dispensation to pursue a secular career. He might have met the teenage Handel in Berlin and during the 1720s he was the younger composer's colleague working for the Royal Academy of Music in London. His operas *Tito Manlio*, *Coriolano* and *Vespasiano* feature magnificent scenes.

3 GIOVANNI BONONCINI (1670-1747)
Part of the Royal Academy of Music's trio of renowned resident composers, his operas are ripe for exploration. Handel admired *Il Xerse* (Rome, 1694) and I'd like to hear *When Saul was King*, written for the 1722 funeral of the First Duke of Marlborough at Westminster Abbey.



6 ANTONIO LOTTI (1666-1740)
Highly regarded in his lifetime, only the Venetian's sacred music (notably one of his settings of the "Crucifixus") has been revived much in modern times. Handel heard Lotti's *Teofane* at Dresden in 1719 and it's about time we had a chance to hear it again.

9 LEONARDO VINCI (?1696-1730)
Trained in Naples and the leading opera composer in Italy in the 1720s, it has been claimed that Vinci (along with Alessandro Scarlatti) was Handel's favourite composer. We ought to get a chance to understand why Handel liked his operas, *Didone abbandonata* and *Artaserse* to name just two.



2 THOMAS ARNE (1710-78)
The Catholic son of a London upholsterer became the most prolific native English theatre composer of his time. Fondly known for "Rule, Britannia!", we ought to hear more revivals of his setting of Milton's masque *Comus* (1738, two years before the first of Handel's Miltonic works).

4 MAURICE GREENE (1696-1755)
The organist at St Paul's Cathedral, and Handel's friend until the two men fell out. Greene's *Song of Barak and Deborah* (1732) sets a Biblical text connected to Handel's early English oratorio *Deborah* (1733), and some say Greene's earlier work is the finer of the two.

7 GIACOMO ANTONIO PERTI (1661-1756)
Nowadays forgotten, the Bolognese master was highly esteemed while Handel was in Italy. If we explore the sacred music of Perti and his Italian contemporaries we might discover more about what influenced Handel's Latin psalms and motets.



10 FRIEDRICH WILHELM ZACHOW (1663-1712)
The name of Handel's boyhood teacher is familiar but none of his music is. Maybe Handel learnt a great deal from his later travels away from Halle, but it would be fascinating to hear some of the older organist's works.

CLASSIC ADS Rautavaara's 'Angel of Light', August 1996

Angel of Light, the seventh symphony by Rautavaara, received rave reviews upon its release in June 1996 – we also nominated it for a Gramophone Award that year. Released on the Ondine label,

the contemporary, ethereal look of the artwork designed around a painting by Finnish artist Pekka Hepoluhta was well suited to Rautavaara's sound world. Many labels in the 1990s reserved their

most creative artwork for contemporary composers: ECM New Series' Arvo Pärt albums still possess an effortless cool, while Philip Glass's recent switch from CBS Masterworks

to Nonesuch gave his album covers a much-needed reboot. Ondine's longstanding dedication to Rautavaara proved to be hugely beneficial for both the label and the composer. ©



A conversation with...

Discovering new
challenges: Lang Lang

Lang Lang

Emma Baker meets the high-wire pianist to find out about his first disc of chamber music

There was a bit of a fracas during Lang Lang's Proms appearance. As he bounced back on stage for an encore, a heckler in the arena hooted derisively. An embarrassed murmur ran through the audience. There was some nervous laughter. But the pianist took it in his stride and began a Chopin Etude, seemingly unruffled.

Lang Lang certainly provokes debate – to some he's a poet with a prodigious technique, to others he's merely a flashy showman. He certainly seems to enjoy playing the part of the superstar soloist, with his shiny jackets, spiky hair and larger-than-life gestures. But, meeting him in the interval, it's easy to warm to his friendly, open enthusiasm.

He's just performed Chopin's Second Concerto, a piece he's played often in his career and recorded last year – he's evidently very fond of it. "Every musician feels that Chopin is personal to them," he says with a smile. "With this piece, there's a sense of longing that makes it so special. I feel it has similarities to Beethoven's Fourth. It makes a singing instrument of the piano, when by nature it's hard and brilliant. Chopin makes everything balanced, rather than percussive."

Lang Lang, known for his high-wire solo acts, has been testing his limits recently, performing with jazz pianist Herbie Hancock, whom he describes as "absolutely the best. He has an extraordinary ability to improvise – he's a great composer, like Mozart in a different style.

I learnt a lot from performing with him and started improvising myself."

He's also turned his hand to chamber music – a genre he's not usually associated with – having just recorded Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio and Rachmaninov's early *Trio élégiaque* with Mischa Maisky and Vadim Repin; he's clearly enthusiastic. "As a soloist with orchestra it's like you're a striker – people kick the ball to you and you just do the work," he explains. "Chamber music is like you're playing in midfield, passing the ball everywhere. It's about teamwork, which can be


Chamber music
is like playing in
midfield, passing the
ball everywhere


difficult for a pianist because you train by yourself every day. Over the past five years I've been playing more and more chamber music and I realise how important it is for my future development. There are so many things that I will never learn as a soloist; through chamber music you digest music much more deeply – you get a complete picture and this is what I love about it."


Tchaikovsky's plangent, soulful, technically challenging Trio in A minor is ideal for the big

musical personalities that perform it here. What were the challenges for Lang Lang? "Having enough time! Luckily we were all at Verbier together and had time to rehearse – just to go in and record would have been disastrous. There's also the challenge of how you hold three completely different personalities together and make music in the same direction. Fortunately I have such wonderful partners in Mischa and Vadim and I think we make a great combination. We were also able to listen very carefully to the edits in the sessions."

Is there more chamber music on the horizon? "Absolutely – I'm accompanying Cecilia Bartoli in recital and playing Mendelssohn, Mozart and Schubert during various residencies next season."

Next year will also bring a welcome two months off in the summer. "The longest break I've had since I started my career," he says. Time to reflect on life so far, perhaps. How does he feel about the various criticisms levelled at him? "I don't mind. A musician needs to learn and to improve and hopefully to play better. So it doesn't matter if the comments are bad or good; you still need to develop." An answer that indicates someone who is confident but not arrogant about his abilities. Lang Lang may surprise his critics yet. 

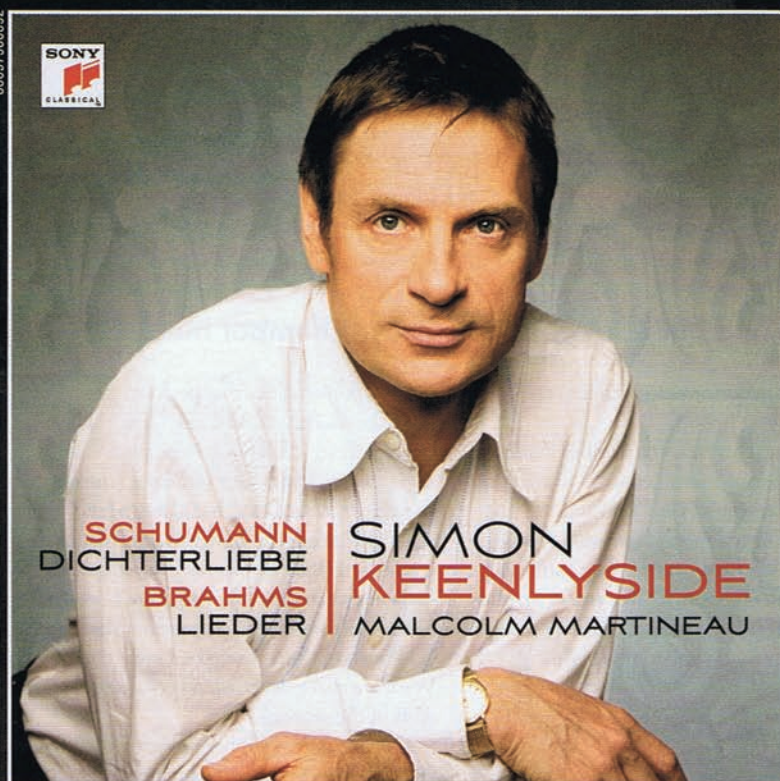
 Lang Lang's new disc of chamber music is released by DG in October

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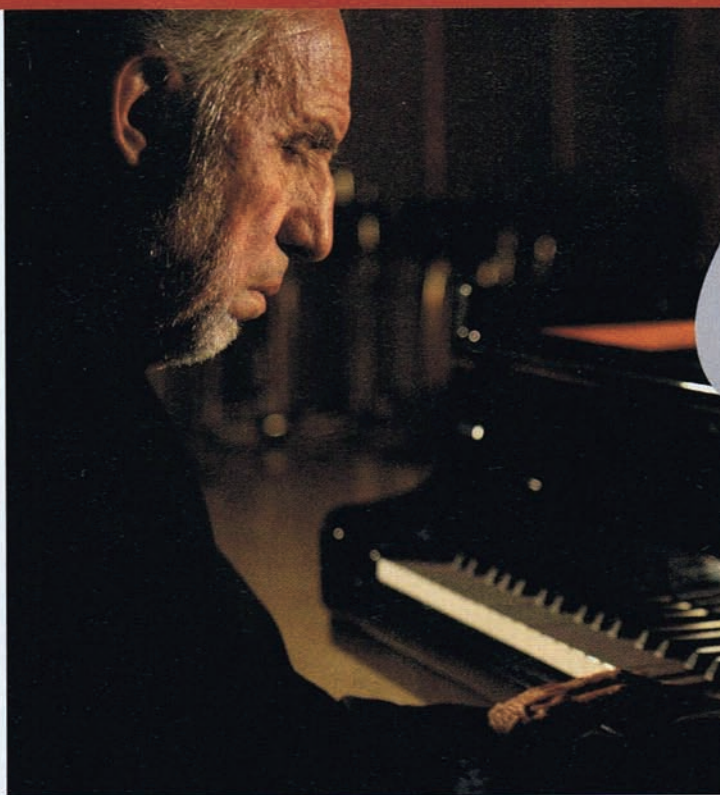
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This past July, the Tour de France came through Verbier, the town where we have our summer home. I was struck by the fact that so many highly trained and committed cyclists from all over the world – each representing so many different countries and so many different cultures – could come together in this one carefully organised and highly competitive event. It reminded me of how much smaller and more connected our world has become in the last several decades. Even when people are competing, there's a sharing of ideas that can lead to something very new and innovative.

In some small way, I see parallels between the diversity and the energy of the Tour de France and the work that began with the Play Bach Trio 50 years ago. By most people's standards, classical music and jazz are two very disparate art forms. One follows a very definite structure, a distinct set of rules. The other is wide open to improvisation. It's not uncommon to think of jazz and classical music as being at odds with each other. And yet, when they come together, like athletes in a competitive and fast-moving race, a new kind of energy is created.

Most people don't realise that the original idea came about almost by accident – an experiment I tried when I was a student at the Paris Conservatoire in the late 1950s. I was looking for a career as a solo pianist, but I came to a point where I realised that I was not going to be an internationally recognised classical musician. Around that time, I had discovered jazz through the music of John Lewis, the piano-player for the Modern Jazz Quartet, and I began playing in some clubs around Paris, just to have an opportunity to explore jazz a little bit. The music of John Lewis gave me the idea to do something



DIARY

Jacques LOUSSIER

The groundbreaking pianist on bridging the gap between jazz and classical music 50 years ago – and today

with improvisation on the themes of Bach. Mind you, I was not expecting any kind of recognition or commercial success with this idea, because I thought no one would be interested in listening to that. I was more surprised than anyone at the success of this music and my recordings with the Play Bach Trio.

The early responses from the critics were mixed. Some people understood that the music of Bach had been the subject of improvisation and reinterpretation by other musicians in earlier centuries, and as such, those same people found it acceptable to take a jazz approach to the music. But others said we shouldn't touch the music of Bach in any way. It's important to remember that, in the 17th and 18th centuries, many composers were improvising on Bach's themes. Bach himself was doing it, with his own music and with the works of others, especially Vivaldi. So at the time, the idea of

taking someone else's music and interpreting it in a different way was quite acceptable. Everyone was doing it in some way, and no one condemned it.

After all of the success with the music of Bach, expanding my repertoire seemed like the next logical step. I wanted to see if the kinds of improvisations I had done with Bach's music could be done with the music of other composers. But I became very aware that not every classical composer took the same approach to composing. Not everyone built his music on the same rules as the ones that Bach followed. As a result, it was difficult at times to find the key to the problem of marrying elements of jazz to the themes of other composers. But I found it, beginning with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. And there have been several others, including Debussy, Ravel, Satie and Beethoven.

I was not expecting any kind of recognition or commercial success

Fifty years after those first recordings with the Play Bach Trio, I am encouraged by the relationship between classical music and jazz. I think more and more jazz musicians have an understanding of classical music – not just the theory, but also the history and the influence on other forms of music. I'm talking about people like Chick Corea or Keith Jarrett. They are jazz musicians first, of course, but they have a very thorough understanding of classical music. They are able to play it in the style of a classically trained pianist, and there is a great maturity to their technique.

But this wasn't always the case. Fifty years ago, it was difficult to find musicians who could play both styles well. It was as if there were two different types of musicians – those who played classical music and those who played jazz – and there was no middle ground between the two. What's more, the audiences were similarly divided. The classical people never wanted to listen to jazz, and the jazz people never wanted to listen to classical music. It was a very clearly defined split in the music world. Thankfully, that has changed. Today there are plenty of musicians who are able to play jazz and classical music, and play them both very well. And there are plenty of listeners who embrace both musics and recognise the middle ground between them. 🎹

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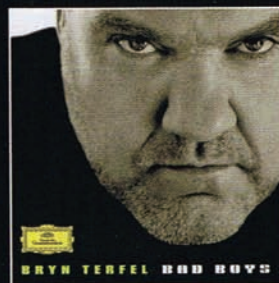
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Philip
KENNICOTT

What lay behind Mark Twain's famous quip about the music of Wagner? An ambivalence and insight that is often ignored



I would not want to be a comedian. The pressure to be ever ready with a bon mot must be excruciating, and in the end, for what are you remembered? A few good lines. A whole lifetime of being clever reduced to a handful of aperçus and punchlines.

Mark Twain, aka Samuel Clemens, has done a little better by posterity. *Huckleberry Finn* is still required reading in some barren outposts of American education. Tom Sawyer is at least an iconic figure. And there's a Mark Twain Award, given annually by the Kennedy Center, which honours comedians who have lived long enough that they're under no obligation to be funny anymore.

Twain once wrote that "Wagner's music is better than it sounds," and I've been thinking a lot about that line in the past few weeks. It's supposed to be a put-down, an impersonation of highbrow snootiness that is self-undermining. How can music be better than it sounds? What kind of boob would listen to music that wasn't at least as good as it sounds?

Well, most of us. Twain's quip is a devilishly clever observation in many ways. It blunders straight into one of the great cleavages of late-19th- and early-20th-century art: the emergence of styles that are difficult, that reward less with surface pleasure than long-term contemplation. Bach's music is, of course, better than it sounds too, but even for listeners who miss its complexity, its surface texture is fully rewarding.

But to many listeners in the late 19th century – and Twain was among them – Wagner's vocal lines had very little sensuous appeal. One might well have said to a sceptic (who hasn't read Wagner's self-justifying theories, or who wants Wagner to sound more like Verdi), "no, it's

better than that". Or, "it's better than it seems, at first". Just as today you might try to explain to someone who listens to really lousy pop music that it isn't "as good as it sounds".

In Twain's hands a prosaic observation about art and complexity becomes funny, perhaps because it reminds us of one of the oddest quirks of being human: we work to enjoy things. The pleasure that results is definitely real, but that we have to work to achieve it is almost comical. And memory of that effort – every time you eat sushi, listen to Schoenberg's String Quartet No 2, or watch a Tarkovsky film – threatens to undermine the pleasure. The resistance we once felt to clammy bits of raw fish, or excursions into the atonal, or tremendously long shots and slow pans, makes itself felt again, mocking us as if we were committing some strange fraud against common sense.

That's how I read Twain's comment. But it turns out that this famous observation about Wagner wasn't necessarily Twain's at all. It appears in some versions of his autobiography, but attributed to someone else.

"I've been told that Wagner's music is better than it sounds," is the actual phrase, which Twain credits to the now forgotten humorist Bill Nye.

A small detail? Twain wasn't just making a quip, he was passing on something he thought worth preserving. And if you dig deeper into his



Mark Twain, master of the good line

'Publicly, Twain mocked complicated art... privately, he pursued those pleasures'

writings, especially his notebooks and journals where he was safely hidden from public view, you begin to see why he thought the line was so meaningful. Publicly, Twain mocked complicated art and the supposed pretensions of anyone who strove to take pleasure in it. Privately, he pursued those pleasures with diligence, and frustration.

"I hate the very name of opera," he wrote in his private journals in 1878. But why? He gives two answers: "Partly because of the nights of suffering I have endured in its presence, and partly because I want to love it and can't." And yet his private writings are filled with asides about how beautiful he finds passages in Wagner and Verdi.

Twain turns out to be conflicted by the long process of learning to like the high art of his day. John Ruskin, who could ferret grand meanings out of paintings in which Twain found visual cacophony, inspired Twain to observe, "only rigid cultivation can enable a man to find truth in a lie." And yet when a journalist went to interview Twain at home in 1890, what books did he observe near the master's desk? The Bible, and Ruskin.

So Twain was energetically ambivalent about art throughout his life. As a humorist, and one credited with bringing the folksy argot and bracing pragmatism of the Westerner into the pantheon of New England-dominated American literature, Twain was bound to be remembered for his lacerating scepticism about opera rather than his private pursuit of its delights. In many ways, he helped define an archetypal American approach to art: the Smart Philistine, smart enough to see the absurdity of high art, and committed to simple pleasures like a religious dogma.

Most of that ambivalence has been lost, and Twain is remembered not as a man struggling with art but as a curmudgeon, confidently dismissing it. He's funnier in the latter role, but it's only half the truth. ●

Musical musings

Simon
CALLOW

As the Stokowski Society shuts up shop, let us pay tribute to its great contribution to understanding the mysterious maestro

A couple of weeks ago I got a letter from my chum Edward Johnson, saying that after 30 years the Stokowski Society (which he, with others, had been instrumental in creating) was finally shutting up shop – membership numbers in decline, CDs not selling as well as they had, committee not getting any younger. I wrote back to say that they had done magnificent work of which they should be very proud, unearthing obscure recordings, researching contemporary comment, eliciting fascinating personal memories and generally separating truth from fantasy. Many great conductors have admirable societies devoted to maintaining their reputations – Beecham and Barbirolli come to mind – but none that has been quite so assiduous as the Stokowski Society in restoring great tranches of the discography to the catalogue. That wonderfully enterprising label Cala has no fewer than 35 CDs conducted by Stokowski in its current catalogue, in so doing provoking a major reassessment of the great man.

Great man he certainly was, though in many ways – and despite the incontrovertible evidence of his musical genius – he remains an enigma. Those who invent (or reinvent) themselves, however flamboyant their manner, often prove curiously elusive. It is virtually impossible to connect the haggard, shaggy-headed sorcerer I saw conducting in London at the end of his life with the little boy born in Marylebone 90 years before. There is no mystery about his birth: we have all the documents. He was born in 1882; his father was a second-generation Pole whose mother was English, and his own mother

Irish. Of his musical gifts, there was never any question, and he was admitted to the Royal College of Music at the age of 13, where he studied – in the same classes as the 24-year-old Vaughan Williams – under Parry, Stanford and Walford Davies, the organist of City Temple, whose assistant he became. By the time he was 20, he graduated to St James's Piccadilly, of which he became organist and choirmaster.



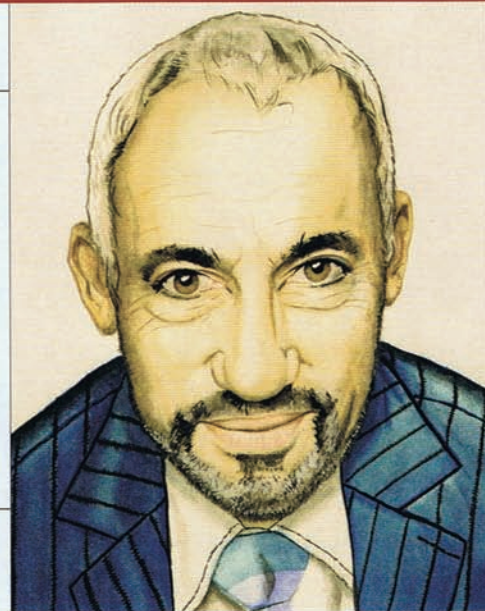
**Marylebone to magician:
the enigmatic Stokowski**

In 1905 he became music director at St Bartholomew's Church in New York, where he dazzled the congregation, then returned to Europe and settled for a brief while in Paris, where, in time honoured fashion, he made his debut substituting for an indisposed maestro. Word spread, as far as Cincinnati, whose fledgling Symphony Orchestra, stuck for a chief conductor, hired him.

Improbable as all this seems, the real mystery is where and how he acquired the confidence to stand in front of an orchestra and impose his will on it. He had attended a few conducting classes with, rather surprisingly, Nikisch, Boult's teacher, whose watchword was "less is more". Evidently, like Beecham, who was similarly unencumbered with professional instruction, Stokowski had an innate musicality and supreme self-confidence.

From the moment he took over the Cincinnati orchestra, he was unstoppable.

**'Where did he acquire
the confidence to stand in
front of an orchestra and
impose his will on it?'**



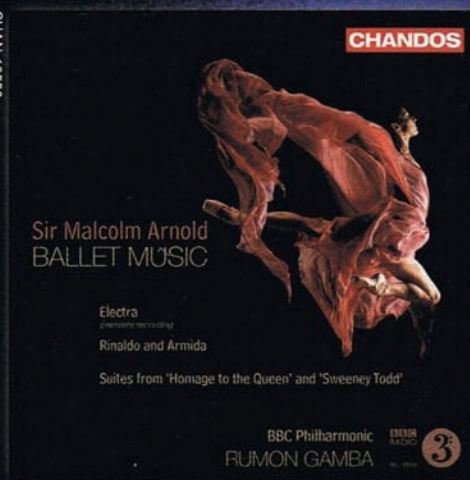
Next stop was Philadelphia; the rest is gramophone history, and the history of music in America. Not only did he effect a staggering transformation in playing standards, he radically changed both the repertoire and the composition of the audience. As well as premiering innumerable engaging little lollipops, mostly pictorial to some degree, he introduced to American audiences the most challenging of contemporary music. The list is astounding: Mahler's Eighth, *The Rite of Spring*, *Wozzeck*, *Gurrelieder*, Sibelius's Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, Elgar's Second, Shostakovich's First, Third, Sixth and Eleventh, Vaughan Williams's Ninth, Britten's Piano Concerto, Schoenberg's Violin and Piano concertos. He gave Charles Ives's allegedly unplayable Fourth Symphony its first outing, and the first performances of almost the entire orchestral oeuvre of Hovhanness.

A great deal of this repertoire he committed to disc. All of it is superbly played, all of it is bursting (sometimes to a dangerous degree) with flamboyant individuality; and yet his rehearsals – of which we have films and recordings – were very straightforward, rather strict, brisk affairs. Famously, within minutes of encountering him for the first time, and before he had uttered a word, any orchestra began to create the Stokowski sound.

BBC Legends, Pearl, Biddulph, Decca, EMI and Philips have all reissued astonishing performances, but the Cala list, including as it does material from every phase of his career – right up to the very final sessions, recorded when he was 95 – is a stupendous resource, for which we have to thank Geoffrey Simon and, of course, Edward Johnson and the shortly to be lamented Stokowski Society. There is now no excuse for anyone not to be familiar with the life's work of possibly the most significant conductor of the 20th century. ©

DISC OF THE MONTH

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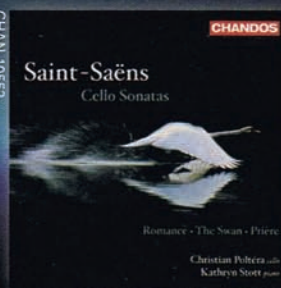
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That strain again – where have we heard this before?

The village music-makers

From the Crouch End Festival Chorus to The Kinks, for decades now a corner of north London has seen classical and rock meet in true harmony, finds local resident Philip Clark

Two degrees of separation between Olivier Messiaen and The Kinks? That's the kind of thing that happens in Muswell Hill, north London. Let me tell you how.

Looking up the hill from East Finchley tube station, take a sharp right along Fortis Green. Back in the mid-1950s a young boy – Raymond – went to a Church of England school there. He relished singing in the school choir, which was accompanied by Mr Bate, the organist from the local church in Muswell Hill. Later he started listening to the bebop and Elvis Presley records that his eldest sister, who was married to a Canadian serviceman, had brought back to the UK. When Raymond joined his brother David's rock'n'roll band, they began rehearsing in the Clissold Arms, the pub on Fortis Green. "Later I learn that Mr Bate's daughter," Ray Davies

– former frontman with The Kinks – tells me, "is Jennifer Bate, the renowned Messiaen organist."

Ray Davies and I (Ray Davies! From The Kinks!) are sitting in Konk Studios (Konk! The Kinks' near-mythical recording studio) talking about his latest album, "The Kinks Choral Collection", which pairs him with the Crouch End Festival Chorus for a set of re-thought Kinks hits. The album is many things. It rocks. "You Really Got Me" – which in 1964 positioned The Kinks somewhere between The Rolling Stones' untidy urgency and the (relative) polish of The Beatles – is given a fervent, declamatory choral refit.

It swings. "Victoria", an anthem from The Kinks' 1969 concept album "Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)", is transformed into authentic, swaying call-and-response gospel music. But most strikingly

– on "Waterloo Sunset", and a medley from "The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society" – the choir point up those strains of Englishness as essential to The Kinks + originality = success equation as their plundering of blues and early rock'n'roll.

"The great thing about working with the choir is everything can be done locally," Davies tells me. "They rehearse in Fortismere School, on Fortis Green, where I went to secondary school. "You Really Got Me" didn't come out too well at first. It's a pop song, and I'd stretched its structure too far. So we came in here to work on a final version the day before the session." Also on Fortis Green, a few yards along from the Clissold Arms, is a house called Fairport where, in 1966, when The Kinks were already rock gods, a group of young folk musicians convened. They rehearsed. They decided to form a band.



Ray Davies and the Crouch End Festival Chorus sing at Waterloo (though not at sunset)

ANDY SHEPPARD/DAVID REDFERN/GETTY IMAGES/SIMON WEIR

And groping for an appropriate styling, they settled on: Fairport Convention. The Kinks, the Crouch End Festival Chorus, Fairport Convention. What is it about this peaceful neighbourhood in North London that sparks music history?

Choirs were an enduring feature of Muswell Hill's cultural landscape during the early part of the 20th century (more of which later), but 1958 marked a turning-point. That year, Ruth Andrewes founded the Finchley Children's Music Group to give the first amateur performance of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde*; their first performance was at Southwark Cathedral, and in April 1959 they gave two further performances at All Saints' Church in East Finchley (still used today as a recording venue by Hyperion). The FCMG embedded into the consciousness of north London children the spiritual value of high-level music-making. Peter Maxwell Davies, Malcolm Williamson and Elizabeth Maconchy, many others too, wrote new pieces for the group. Like swimming, throw children in at the deep end and they float.

In '58, the Davies brothers – who would have been a suitable age for the FCMG – were instead finding their creative feet at the Clissold Arms. Rejecting early band names like The Bo-Weevils, The Ramrods and The Ravens, they eventually settled on The Kinks because it best symbolised their “kinky” mode of dress: a kind of camp highwayman chic. “In those days the Clissold Arms was a rough-and-ready boozer,” Davies recalls. “The neighbours complained about the noise at home, and our parents sent us to the pub to rehearse. Then we played a couple of shows there. I recently heard some tapes of an early rehearsal. We weren't called The Kinks then, but we did a ska version of “Never on a Sunday” and we were surprisingly soulful.

“I loved blues singers like Howlin' Wolf, Big Bill Broonzy and Bo Diddley. But when *You Really Got Me* went to Number 1 in 1964 eyebrows were raised because I didn't sing in an American accent. The generation before us, Cliff Richard is an example, sang transatlantic. But they were singing covers of American songs. I didn't know I was going to be a songwriter



From the music scene of a genteel corner of North London came The Kinks



The Finchley Children's Music Group: singers of Benjamin Britten and Peter Maxwell Davies

when I wrote “You Really Got Me”. I assumed it was a fluke. So I thought – I'll sing it the way I am. I'm a London person. That's my voice.”

David Temple – music director of the Crouch End Festival Chorus – also believes in natural vocal enunciation: perhaps that's why he instinctively bonds with Davies. “The choir was formed in 1984 to perform at the Crouch End Festival,” Temple tells me. “The time was absolutely right for a new choir. Crouch End was emerging as a happening area, and there were three or four local choirs that were essentially dying. We ‘rescued’ their best singers and auditioned for new blood. The turning-point for us was in 1994, when we were invited to give the 50th anniversary performance of Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* at the Barbican. Then people realised how dedicated and serious we were.

“Auditioning someone for the choir, I always put the emphasis on beautiful, rather than trained, quasi-operatic voices. I respect the trained voice enormously, but it's not how ‘normal’ people sing. I want the choir to be versatile and to sing with imagination.” Which is why they can sing Tippett, Fauré's Requiem – and Ray Davies? “That's our trademark.” Are there singers who “graduate” from the Finchley Children's Music Group to the Festival Chorus? “Absolutely – we encompass the telegram to the Twitter generation.”

Retaining his authentic London sound was a priority for Davies as the choir found their

way into his world. “I believe in singing the way you speak,” he explains. “My singing voice is less ‘cockles and mussels’ than, for instance, Ian Dury's, but I was determined to get the vowel sounds right. Choirs have a tendency to sound American when they sing pop music, or fall back into scooby-dooing. Temple knows the

strength of every voice in his choir: he knew how to re-voice chords to help get the sound I wanted.”

It's the hoariest cliché going, but London really is a collective of villages.

This genteel area of north London – with Highgate Woods to the south, Alexandra

Palace towering above – is slightly removed from city hardcore busyness, but retains an urban drive. “The Village Green Preservation Society”, The Kinks' 1968 masterpiece, is a Dylan Thomas-like memory space about a more innocent age: in essence, a rock album about the joys of strawberry jam, Sherlock Holmes and glancing through old family photo albums – an album that threw a quizzical glance towards the Swinging Sixties while swinging with the best of them. The archetypal village about which Davies writes surely has origins in Muswell Hill. Hear how this very English choir weaves against rockist backbeats and flashy electric guitar solos as they revisit The Green on “The Kinks Choral Collection”. Listen to decades of north London rock and classical music history shake hands. ☺

My singing voice is less ‘cockles and mussels’ than, for instance, Ian Dury's

Are musicals and opera the same thing?

James Inverne, **Jeremy Sams** and **Richard Thomas** discuss two genres that polarise opinion

JI The topic of the day is musicals and opera. Both art forms have traditionally been put into their own boxes. Opera fans often turn their noses up at musicals – perhaps that's something to do with what they see as easy emotional manipulation. And musicals fans can feel that opera is a step too far and not for them. Jeremy, musicals developed out of opera and operetta. Do you feel that they've ever really left?

JS When you talk about opera and musicals it depends what you mean. I find Rodgers & Hammerstein more similar to Puccini than, say, Mozart is to Monteverdi. There are many ways of telling stories on stage with music and drama. And you can call them opera, you can call them musicals. *Carmen* is an opera with dialogue; so are *Faust*, *Entführung*, *Fidelio*. Are those less operatic than *Les Misérables*, which has no dialogue at all?

To be honest, the actual musical and dramaturgical similarities are extreme. Of course, it's the same genre, it's a way of telling a story using music on stage in front of an audience. What's different are the cultural associations. There is still a snobbery about musicals, that opera is somehow a higher art, or better; but actually the thing itself isn't in essence different. What is different is the cultural context of it, what you expect when you go to an opera house, or to see a musical, and other purely pragmatic things such as the nature of voices in relation to the size of the house.

JI On which note, Richard, you wrote *Jerry Springer – The Opera*. Called an opera, you did it at the Cambridge Theatre and other venues associated with musicals. I imagine the audiences you got tended to be musicals audiences, and the types of voices were mixed. What did you think people would have expected and how did you want them to react?

RT We actually had a good split but there were those two distinct audiences. There's a great snobbery between the two cultures. I would term it all as music drama. Not in the Wagnerian sense but in the sense that you're essentially using two languages at the same time – the language of music and the language of words. That opens up infinite possibilities. So someone can be singing about love but the music shows that they're feeling hate. That's great and is the only reason to do it.



James Inverne is editor of *Gramophone* and author of a number of books about musicals



Composer and lyricist **Richard Thomas** is currently working on a new opera about Anna Nicole Smith



Director and translator **Jeremy Sams** has worked on shows ranging from Wagner to *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*

Operatic conventions:
Rodgers & Hammerstein's
The Sound of Music on
Broadway in 1959



It's a very elusive, incredibly difficult art form to pull off. Because to get it right you're raising the bar in terms of intensity; you can lose the pace of the music and the drama so easily.

The conversation moves on to discuss the different traditions of voice production.

RT With opera singers you've got a crazy palette to use and a sort of formality. Actually, it's a kind of alienation that is very useful for comic purposes. In opera you can get away with violence and obscenity that you can't in music theatre.

JI Why is that?

RT It's to do with the technique; it cushions and diminishes the impact.

JI It always struck me that the reason for all the swearing in *Jerry Springer* wasn't the number of swear words, it was the idea of using "high art" – it was couched as an opera – to depict "low art", trailer trash.

JS Even by calling it *The Opera*. It's a great title but all you're doing is circling the backs of other people's snobbery, isn't it? Saying, here's a low-life thing and here's a high-life concept.

RT Only if you consider those things to be a low life and high life clash. It wasn't supposed to be laughing at the expense of poor people.

JI But wasn't the point that you *did* dignify these characters? And the thing with music, and perhaps especially with opera, is that you can point to an inner nobility even of characters who are swearing at each other. And isn't that something you can do more with the style and conventions of opera than musicals?

JS If you can say you can dignify someone more with an opera that really does imply that opera is a higher or more dignified art form, which is nonsense. I'm surprised to hear you saying that.

JI The word “opera”, the vocal production and perhaps some sense of associated orchestral opulence have all contributed to an expectation of some sort of grandeur which you wouldn’t usually associate with that subject matter.

RT But then you listen to something like *Show Boat* and there’s plenty of grandeur there.

JS The way people sound when they sing is not an essence of the dramaturgic piece, it’s just how people sound, like how people look. It’s an adverb not a noun, as it were.

RT However I would say that there were things I knew would only be funny if there were operatic elements in the show.

JI The musicals producer Cameron Mackintosh once told me that operatic voices are very good at suggesting dogmatic, steadfast characters who won’t be swerved but that they are less flexible than their musical theatre counterparts.

RT That’s very true. That’s often clear in *Porgy*. Gershwin’s tunes are slaughtered operatically, but you hear one or two bars of Nina Simone singing “I loves you Porgy” and your heart melts. It’s often a disappointment when you hear it with opera voices.

JS I disagree. There are good and bad singers.

RT I would say if you want absolute sentimentality, someone to rip your heart out, you’d go for a musical theatre performer.

JI There are stylistic traditions as well. Things that have become clichés. That little catch in the voice to denote deep emotion you get among some musicals singers, the holding back for effect before letting the vibrato go...

JS Anyone’s capable of that in any genre.

JI That may well be, but is there anything in the idea that the opera voice comes out more or less fully formed, that it’s a different kind of sound?

JS These are not musical questions so much as historical questions. Opera started in small court venues but when it became a bourgeois phenomenon singers were playing to huge houses and so had to make a noise to fill the house and eventually to defeat increasingly large orchestras. So it evolved in a Darwinian kind of way to match sociological change. And the music then evolves to match the sounds and so on. Had there been radio mikes in the 19th century, the whole sound would be different. But it’s just a stylistic trope that became a tradition.

RT As a composer I know when I want an operatic timbre here, a musical theatre timbre here.

JS Those sort of terms are rapidly going out of date. The reason that opera singers have those sounds is because the new pieces demand it.

JI brings up the change in direction in musical theatre since the 1980s, when he suggests the two forms moved closer together.

JI Suddenly with Lloyd Webber and Boublil and Schönberg, who wrote *Les Misérables* and *Miss*

Saigon, we had through-sung musicals with an operatic structure.

JS The through-sung musicals aren’t operatic at all. What’s happened there, which fascinates me, is that the dramaturgy, which is so astonishing in the Rodgers & Hammerstein shows, disappeared. These were people steeped in dramaturgy, steeped in theatre; when Sondheim, who’s in that tradition, comes to London he’ll see eight shows in a week. Lloyd Webber was originally not so much a theatre person as a songwriter. Schönberg absolutely is not connected to theatre in that way. And you could add Elton John to that list. Those last two have little sense of musical theatre and dramaturgy. What they have got is directors who can take that raw material and turn it into a piece of theatre – it’s dramaturgy by director rather than by author. That’s the new dramaturgy.

RT Stephen Daldry had a huge impact on *Billy Elliott – The Musical*.

JS Look at *Les Mis*, *Billy Elliott*, *Mamma Mia*, *Miss Saigon*. Not for nothing are those directed by four of the greatest directors working in the world – Trevor Nunn, Stephen Daldry, Phyllida Lloyd, Nicholas Hytner.

JI That’s fascinating because most people say that musicals got operatic in the ’80s and what you’re saying is that they had less in common with opera then than did Rodgers & Hammerstein.

JS These guys knew theatre and incidentally used operatic ideas. There are structures, since Hammerstein, that are repeated and work, like the “dream ballet” device in Act 2 where time passes. That tradition comes from opera. Sometimes the link is clear – at the end of *The King and I*, the King dies almost unnoticed, which is exactly the same structure as the end of *La bohème*. And that’s the difference between those two works – nothing whatsoever.

RT The other thing about opera, and I’m writing one about Anna Nicole Smith for Covent Garden, is that there are no previews, which is very different to musicals. You’re just told that the first performance of *Anna Nicole* in 2011 will be opening night. I’m having kittens about that! For *Springer* we had months in various places before the big London opening. In opera you can only beg and fight for sing-throughs!

JS This is why Sondheim won’t touch opera. He says: “Give me two weeks of previews and I’ll write for any house you like.”

JI Could you not use a co-production with a smaller house effectively to have the musical theatre preview experience?

JS There’s no hiding place! ☹

The Faber Pocket Guide to Musicals, by James Inverne, is available now



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Nicola Benedetti: staying true to herself



The art of learning

Violinist **NICOLA BENEDETTI** on how trumpeter Wynton Marsalis helped her learn to love her music-making

About three and a half years ago I was in New York to take part in the Academy of Achievements, an international event for prominent young people. Among those coming to speak and play to us was the great jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. He heard me play and said he was impressed. I immediately felt he was someone who could, in some strange way, see right through me. It's very rare that you get told things that you haven't heard before, but he's given me this amazing advice.

This was a strange time for me. I was just beginning to do a lot of concerts, recording my first CD – there were a lot of life-changing things going on. At that point of my life, to have someone who was objective and had no vested interest, but who'd been through it all and could help me stay true to myself, that's when I really began to find myself and to work out what I wanted to do.

Confidence was not my strong point then. Yet he showed me that I should focus on the things that were unique to me, that I should learn to value them rather than dismiss them as things I was simply born with. He assured me that if I focussed on my strengths rather than obsessing about what I

needed to work on, the rest would come. After all, players of past eras weren't deluged with recordings – they didn't obsess about the sounds others would make – they'd simply develop their own sounds.

At the same time, he'd say, it's vital to remember that the music is absolutely at the centre of every performance. When you're young and begin to play in public, everyone talks about how you've played, about your interpretations – it's all about you. And when you go on stage it's easy to turn your focus on that rather than simply serve the music.

We talk regularly and I still play to him from time to time. His harmonic understanding is unbelievable. And Wynton is an obsessive learner, he can't stop studying books and manuscripts, whether it be jazz, classical or folk. That in itself also introduced me to the notion that the simple act of learning, whatever it is you're learning, is valuable. Everything informs everything else.

Meeting him changed my life. Because what he taught me boils down to one thought – and I suppose it comes down to learning to love what I can do. ©

Benedetti's new disc, 'Fantasie', is reviewed on page 86

What am I?

Put your wits against the Gramophone editorial team

Who? What? When? or Where? Each month we give you a set of clues to help you solve a musical mystery.

He was born in the same town as a current Russian conductor- pianist, exactly a century earlier. Given the size of his discography, I'm surprised he has not recorded my best-known work.

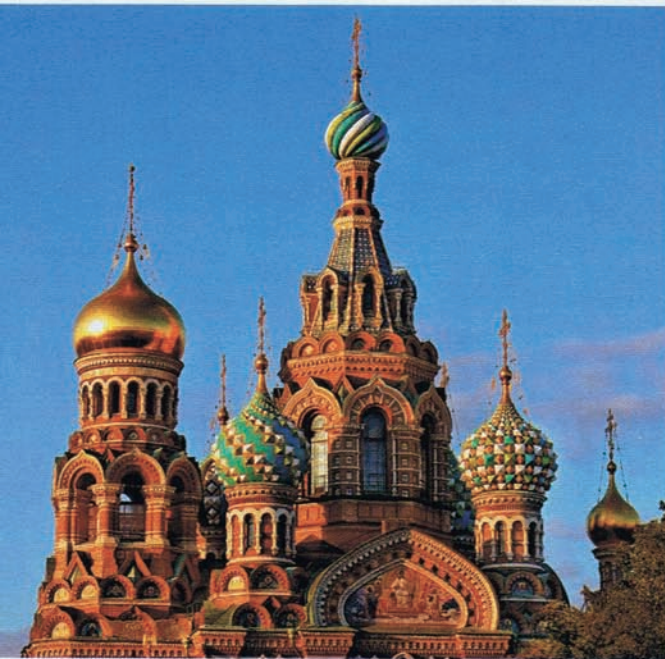
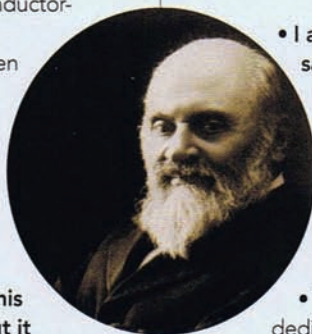
Brahms took 37 years to write his 1st symphony, but it took me 33 to finish mine. It was premiered the year after

the German composer died.

• The nationalism I helped promote among the composers of my homeland was more influential than my compositional legacy.

• I am buried in the same St Petersburg cemetery as my four most famous acolytes. Together we were quite a handful.

• Tchaikovsky dedicated three works to me, including a symphony.



Petersburg, where our mystery musician (pictured top) is buried

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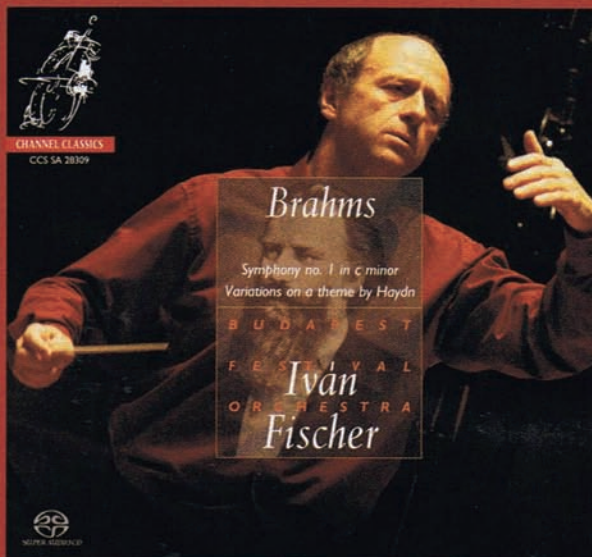
AUGUST ISSUE WINNER: The mystery singer was Robert Merrill. The first correct answer drawn came from Magnus Lindgren of Eslöv, Sweden, who wins a selection of CDs.

The winner will receive a selection of CDs. Employees of Haymarket Media Group and their agents and families may not enter. The Publisher's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered. There is no cash alternative. Gramophone and Haymarket Media Group would like to contact you with special offers and news we think you'll find interesting. If you do not wish to receive such information via post, phone or e-mail, please write to Data Controller, Circulation Department, at the address above or e-mail datacontroller@haymarket.com

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ONE TO WATCH

Name Erik Bosgraaf**Born** 1980, The Netherlands**Plans** Forthcoming concerts include November 21, Concertgebouw, Amsterdam; November 24-27, Sofia Baroque Arts Festival; December 6, Studio LOOS, The Hague. Channel Classics releases his disc of Vivaldi recorder concertos in November.

Erik Bosgraaf

Anyone who considers the recorder the sole preserve of the period-instrument world should think again. Dutch recorder-player Erik Bosgraaf is equally at home in early and contemporary music, expanding his instrument's repertoire through commissioning new works, some of which incorporate new media, while a concert in December will see him improvising with four laptop artists. But then, as a former rock band member, Bosgraaf's definition of what is good music healthily transcends not just era

but genre too. His first recording, of music by 17th-century composer Jacob van Eyck, topped the Dutch classical chart, while his contemporary music CD/DVD "Big Eye" was picked in our annual Critics' Choice by Gramophone's William Yeoman, who called it "wacky, irreverent and thought-provoking". His latest disc, of Vivaldi recorder concertos, is released by Channel Classics in November. Bosgraaf this year received a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, with which he will expand his instrument collection and commission further works. ©

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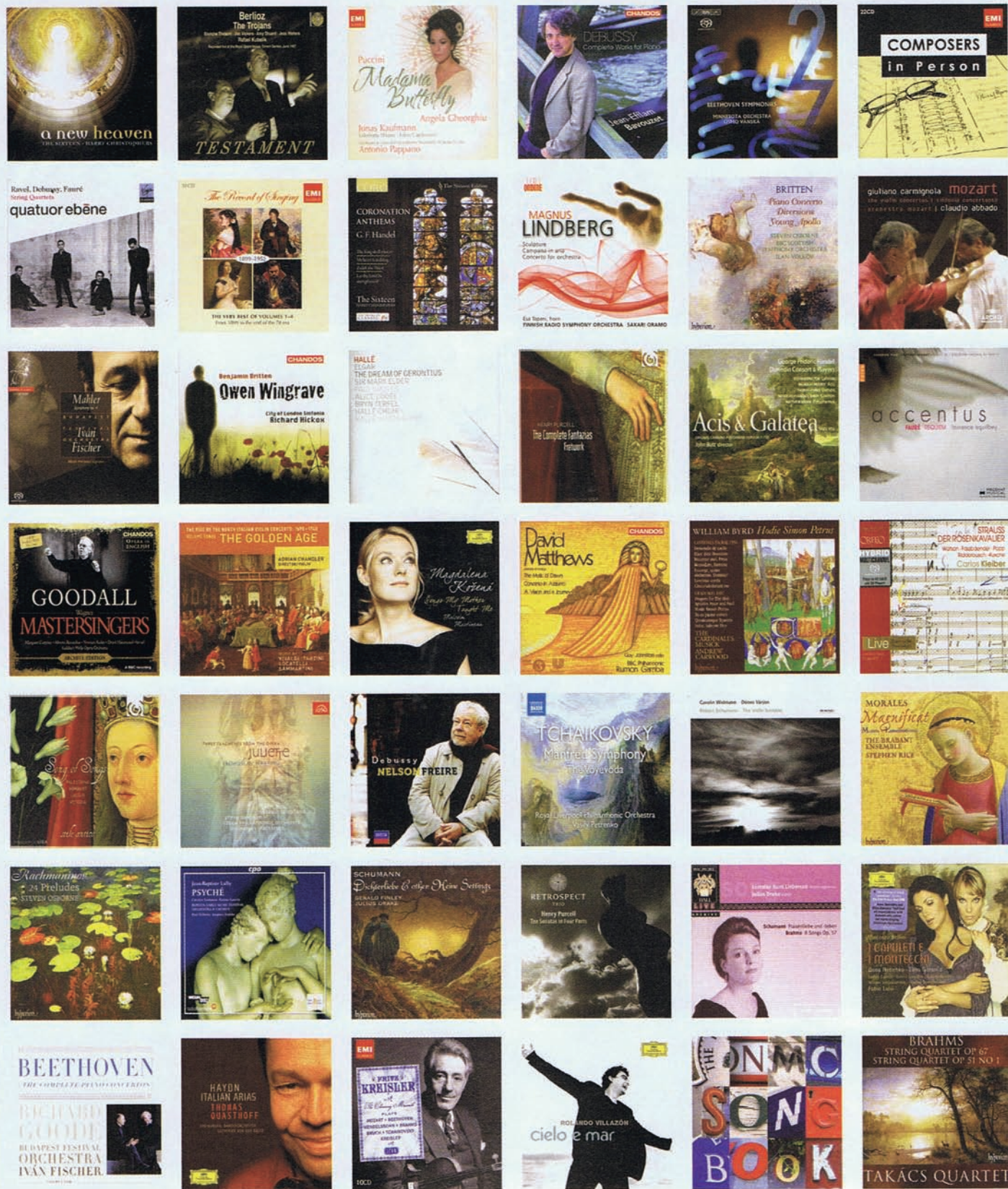


The CLASSIC *fm*
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Awards 2009

Awards 2009

The past year has been a wonderfully rich one for classical recordings – join us as we celebrate the very best of them

- 38 INTRODUCTION
- 40 ARTIST OF THE YEAR
- 42 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
- 45 MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY /
SPECIALIST CLASSICAL CHART AWARDS
- 47 LABEL OF THE YEAR
- 49 SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT / INNOVATION AWARDS
- 51 EDITOR'S CHOICE / YOUNG ARTIST OF THE YEAR AWARDS
- 53 THE AWARD-WINNING RECORDINGS
- 64 RECORDING OF THE YEAR



Notes from a record year



The 12 months from mid-2008 to mid-2009 have produced what seasoned Awards watchers might consider a vintage year. Read on...

As always, we invited the record industry to nominate a proportion of their (new) releases drawn from the period from the beginning of June 2008 to the end of May 2009. This produced a long list of nearly 500 recordings. This list was then scrutinised by panels of specialist voters who then voted and reduced it to just six discs in each of the 15 categories.

At this point, any critic from *Gramophone's* panel of 50 reviewers could opt into as many categories as he or she wanted. Copies of the short-listed discs were dispatched and, over the course of the summer, music was consumed, evaluated, discussed and finally voted upon. This produced the winner in each category (and for your interest we list the top three discs in each category and their votes in the following pages).

For the Recording of the Year we convened a panel of critics and each was sent all 15 category

winners. We met at Haymarket's Hammersmith offices in early August and spent a long morning discussing the winners, weighing up their merits, considering whether they added that something special to the vast and well-stocked record catalogue that has grown up over the past century. A vote was taken and the winner of winners emerged – interestingly the disc voted as Recording of the Year by this jury was exactly the same disc that would have won had the sheer weight of votes at the Second Round been taken into account. So the jury confirmed the wider critical vote.

In addition to the 15 recording awards, we make, as usual, a number of special artist awards – a public vote gives us the Artist of the Year and votes by *Gramophone's* editorial team secure the other winners. It's been a strong year and one that reflects the continuing imagination and flair of an industry that has given us all so much. ©

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

Artist of the Year

The Sixteen become the first ensemble to triumph in Gramophone's public vote

What a remarkable year The Sixteen have had – and what a superb way for the much-loved and consistently excellent choir to celebrate their 30th anniversary season!

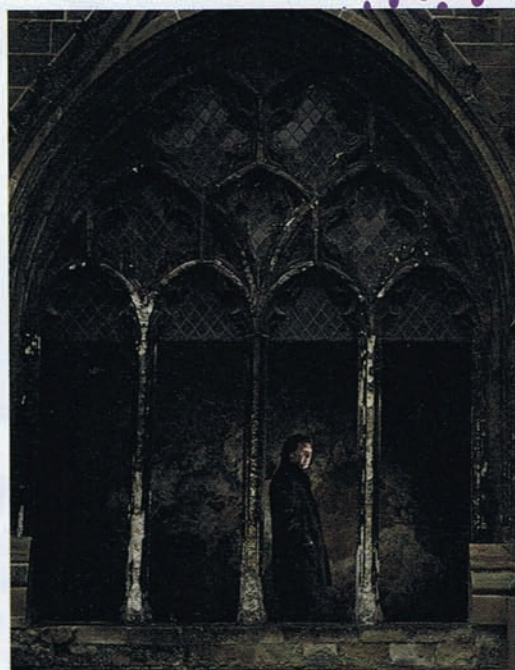
It's particularly pleasing to give this Award – which recognises the contribution made by an artist (or in this case artists) to musical life over the past 12 months – to The Sixteen. Not only do they perform and record music often little-known to all but the choral aficionado (and sometimes even then...) with exquisite style and beauty of sound, they are also among the hardest-working and most dedicated ambassadors for choral music, something we explored in our May issue cover story.

Every year, under the stewardship of founder-conductor Harry Christophers, The Sixteen take a thoughtfully curated programme of music – usually, though not exclusively, early repertoire – on a tour of cathedrals, chapels and concert halls throughout the UK, hosting a number of workshops for amateur singers en route. But as well as the Choral Pilgrimage, they are as likely to be found presenting an oratorio at the Barbican, seen performing at the Southbank Centre where they are associate artists or at international venues, appearing on television in the BBC's

Sacred Music series, or heard on radio as "The Voices of Classic FM".

And, of course, recording. Their catalogue was already extensive when, in the late 1990s the group founded their own label, Coro. It continues to go from strength to strength, garnering plaudits with its releases exploring the full breadth of the choral repertoire. This year alone has seen The Sixteen commit composers as varied as Purcell and Guerrero, Howells and Stanford, James MacMillan and Roxanna Panufnik to disc. The highlight must however be the superb disc of Handel Coronation Anthems, *Gramophone's* CD of the Month in April and now winner of the Baroque Vocal category at this year's Awards. It demonstrates perfectly what is so inspiring about this group: some of the most familiar pieces in the choral repertoire, even something as firmly etched on our consciousness as *Zadok the Priest*, emerged feeling newly crafted and thrillingly alive.

But perhaps most satisfying – for us as well as for The Sixteen – is that this year sees the group receive Awards both from our critics and from the public.



The Sixteen are among the hardest-working and most dedicated ambassadors for choral music

Affirmation, if it were needed, that this group both excel artistically and inspire and engage audiences throughout the UK and beyond (alongside *Gramophone* readers, listeners to radio stations around the world from Classic FM to CBC in Canada to Radio New Zealand voted).

The Sixteen emerged as clear front-runners from an extremely prestigious field. Their fellow nominees were: pianists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly, soprano Diana Damrau, conductors Gustavo Dudamel, René Jacobs and Mariss Jansons, and bass-baritones Gerald Finley and Bryn Terfel. Not a bad selection to beat. ©



NICK WHITE, SAM BARKER, MARK HARRISON

Collective achievement:
The Sixteen (bottom left
and right) and, left, their
inspirational leader
Harry Christophers



The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

Lifetime achievement

Pierre-Laurent Aimard pays tribute to Nikolaus Harnoncourt, a true visionary

My first experience of Nikolaus Harnoncourt as a musician was through his recordings and through reading his books, and then a meeting that happened in the Berlin Philharmonie in spring 1999 where he was rehearsing Strauss. This was very interesting, because reading his books I felt that even though he had always acted in other musical fields than mine until then, it seemed to me that there was the same kind of attitude – of going to the texts and trying to understand them and bring them to life. And speaking for a long time with him it appeared this was the case. It was a fascinating conversation.

He suggested I play something, which I did – and then proposed that I play and record with him the Beethoven concertos. I would certainly never have recorded them at that moment, but the fact that he proposed that to me after having heard me play Beethoven, the fact that he was interested to ask somebody who was quite fresh in his approach to the concertos – the kind of very special way he was going to the pieces in general, the kind of risks he took, was for me something incredibly attractive. It was not the fact that he wanted to record them that attracted me, but the fact that he wanted to make this adventure.

Musical life is interesting if you are nourished and enlightened by strong personalities, and in this case it seemed to me hugely enriching to work with somebody who had such a very creative attitude. He has a way of combining a great knowledge, working with the text with a great freedom in vision, intuition and dramaticism. I felt this alchemy was very strong.

He has always worked with a small number of groups that he has chosen and that have chosen him – such as the

Chamber Orchestra of Europe. There is a very strong relationship: this is a group that knows him personally, his way of acting, teaching, living the music. When musicians know each other so well, they can go very far, very quickly.

There are conductors who can get very “alive” interpretations without Harnoncourt’s period-instrument background, but this way of having done things gives a special identity to his interpretations. He is a musician who



is incredibly passionate and committed in music, with a pure spirit as well, discovering new scores, in general and for himself. He has a very young soul.

He is somebody who has completely changed – though he says that a part of it was not his intention – the approach to music. He is not a prisoner of his own history: he goes on surprising everybody by the choice of the repertoire he does, and his way of music-making. He is still shocking the world!

I have been lucky to have performed with him on so many occasions – the Beethoven concertos, the Triple Concerto, the Dvořák Concerto. He is a phenomenal musician, who has given a very strong direction to a whole era of music-making. ©

He is a musician who is incredibly passionate and committed in music, with a pure spirit as well



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Nikolaus Harnoncourt

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OVER THE YEARS



MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

A newly created Award, in partnership with The Times, recognises an inspiring individual in the voluntary music sector

In association with
THE TIMES

When recently *Gramophone* ran an online feature about the world's most inspiring orchestras – focusing exclusively on their social roles rather than their musical quality – there was a fulsome reaction. Readers wrote to voice their approval and media outlets reported on the initiative. Music has always had a transformative power; it can help to give lives direction, even to give life itself a measure of clarity and meaning. More practically, perhaps, the meritocratic system of auditions can provide a way up for those from underprivileged backgrounds.

All of these benefits have been demonstrated by the much-lauded Venezuelan *Sistema* and its most famous graduates, Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra. Yet, with all the praise heaped upon these young players and their charismatic conductor, it might seem, judging from the media coverage, as though there has been little elsewhere of any comparable worth. Rather, the *sistema*'s moment in the sun ought also to focus attention on the many other marvellous schemes around the world.

In the UK, for instance, the voluntary music-making sector is enjoying something of a boom time in terms of popularity. According to the umbrella organisation Making Music, in England alone there are currently more than 11,000 voluntary music groups, the overwhelming

majority of which play classical music. Making Music's members, which represent only 20 per cent of all UK groups, comprise in excess of 180,000 music volunteers. Their member groups conduct some 1400 educational workshops each year and present more than 10,000 musical events to 1.6 million people. So *Gramophone* felt it was high time to recognise with a special award the people who make this happen.

Nor would this award go to an acknowledged star. We wanted to recognise the unsung heroes, the people who spend their days, often their precious spare time, coaxing and cajoling people to join in with their vision. Those, perhaps, who devote themselves to finding people they can help – the homeless who can find new friends and a sense of purpose through singing opera, the elderly or infirm who find themselves able to contribute through music, or simply those who desperately need an outlet for their creativity.

That is why, in partnership with *The Times* (renewing our collaboration from last year's Gold Disc), *Gramophone* has scoured the country for a winner of the newly created Music in the Community Award. This is a prize to be given to someone who has, to an inspiring degree, transformed lives through music in the voluntary sector. A public vote will have determined the winner, not yet known at the time of going to press, so be sure not to miss our announcement in the next issue and on the *Gramophone* website.

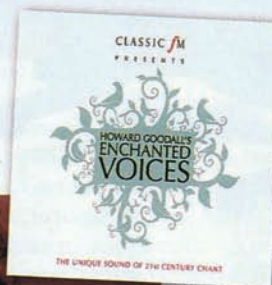
SPECIALIST CLASSICAL CHART AWARD

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

This year has seen the launch of The Specialist Classical Chart – and a new award marks the disc that dominated it

Gramophone started publishing The Specialist Classical Chart at the beginning of the year, the culmination of a longstanding desire to provide a dynamic list of each week's highest-selling pure classical releases. Compiled by the Official Charts Company in association with our colleagues at the British Phonographic Industry, the aim of the chart was, naturally, to show which new releases were making their way out of the record shops fastest. Other attempts at such a chart have always been dominated by themed compilations and crossover releases, obscuring the newly recorded core classical fare that is after all *Gramophone*'s meat and drink.

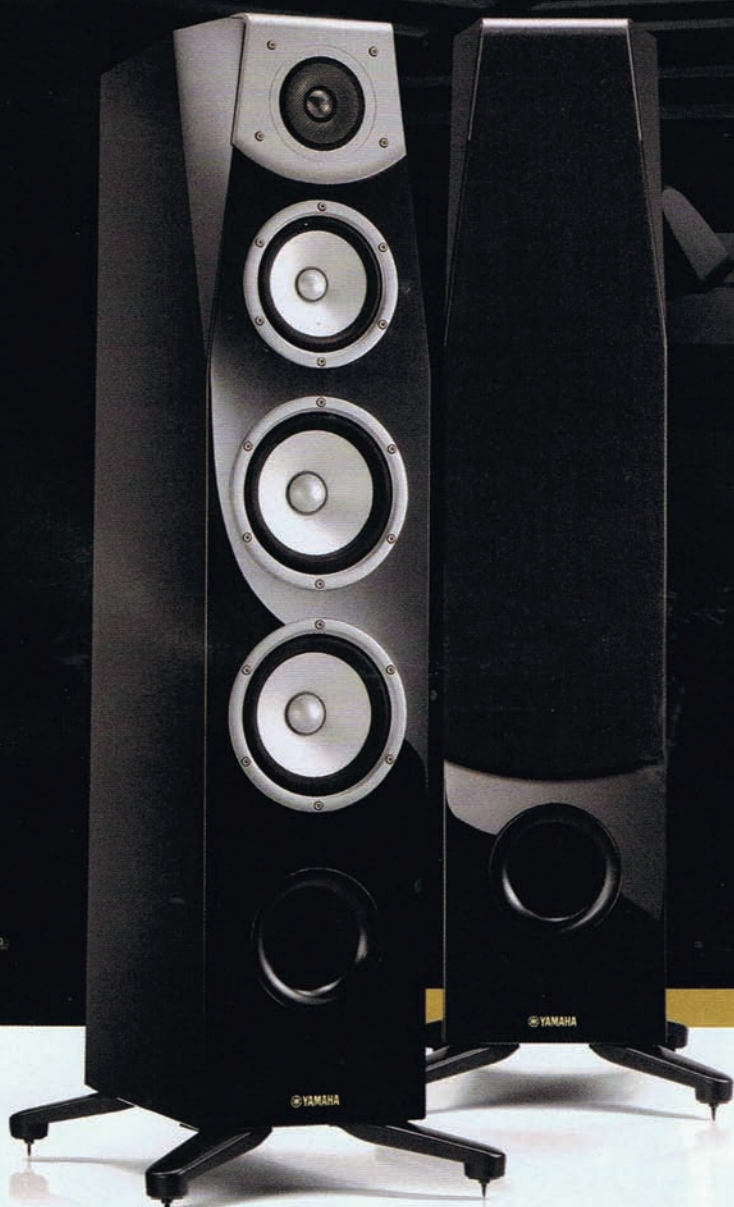
The top of the Specialist Classical Chart has been graced by discs such as the Angela Gheorghiu *Madama Butterfly* and the Anna Netrebko *Capuleti* (which vied for the top spot back in March), Catrin Finch's *Goldberg Variations* and Marin Alsop's thrilling new recording of her mentor Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. The range of the chart is



demonstrated by contrasting the very first Number One – the Gala Ensemble's "The Best of Gilbert & Sullivan" – with a high-profile entry, straight in at Number Two, for Thomas Adès's *The Tempest* in June. But one disc has clung tenaciously to the top of the chart. Howard Goodall's "Enchanted Voices" was released in March and flew in at the Number One

spot, where it remains even now (see page 15 for this week's top sellers). Goodall is best known for his TV theme tunes – *Blackadder*, *Mr Bean*, *The Vicar of Dibley*, *QI* – and for his own television programmes, most recently *The Truth About Christmas Carols* and *Hallelujah! The Story of Handel's Messiah*. Choral works include the Rambert Dance Company-commissioned *Eternal Light*. We present him with this Award in recognition of the chart domination this year of "Enchanted Voices".

YAMAHA



Soavo-1

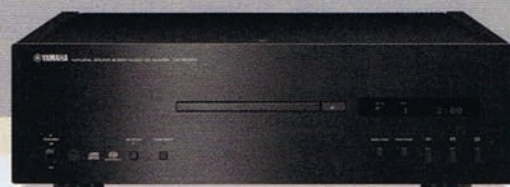
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Label of the Year

Gramophone salutes a unique German independent record label that reflects the exquisite taste and vision of one man

In an age of increasing standardisation, it's good to salute genuine individuality. Each year we pay tribute to a record label that demonstrates a winning blend of creativity, imagination, business acumen, style – all adding up to that word again: individuality. This year we turn the spotlight on a label that has been ploughing its particular furrow with notable success for 40 years, ECM, and more particularly for “classical music” fans, its New Series.

ECM is one of those rare labels that bears the fingerprints of one man on everything it does – the visionary Manfred Eicher, far more than just an “A&R man”. He *is* ECM and ECM *is* Manfred Eicher. Everything the label does reveals the care and attention to detail that makes his label one of those extraordinary destinations for music lovers who want something a little bit different. And, ironically, that “little bit different” might be repertoire that other labels consider so “core” that they give it a wide berth – like the Beethoven piano sonatas. Typical of Eicher, he felt able to tackle this Everest of the piano repertoire with a musician who was absolutely ready to share his interpretations of these 32 works, András Schiff. And needless to say the results have been among the most interesting surveys of these pieces. Or this year's revelatory disc of the Schumann violin sonatas with Carolyn Widmann and Dénes Várjon. When Duncan Druce reviewed the disc in these pages he commented that “whether or not you know the music well, you'll be enthralled and

delighted”. And not only is that a tribute to these performers but it's also a response to so much that ECM does: making the familiar new again (one might also point to the Zehetmair Quartet's Record of the Year-winning disc of Schumann's string quartets from 2003, a disc that still conveys a freshness and sense of discovery that is palpable).

But ECM New Series, for many people, is about new music. While many companies shy away from contemporary music, Eicher seeks it out – and again it's a tribute to his taste and extraordinary judgement that many of the composers he's championed have gone on to become familiar names: Arvo Pärt, Giya Kancheli, Valentin Silvestrov and Erkki-Sven Tüür, to name just four. And ECM, once it has found a musician to champion, does it properly, not merely with a single disc but often exploring different genres of that musician's art. And of course that is one incentive to stay with the label and follow the lead it so obviously offers.

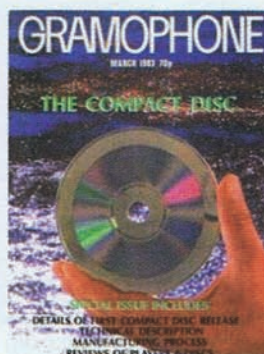
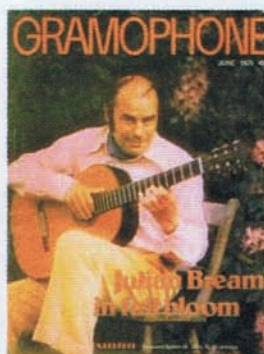
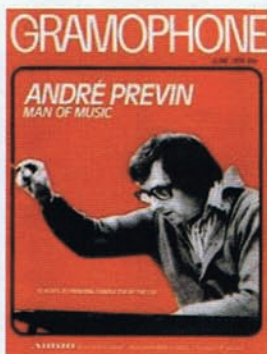
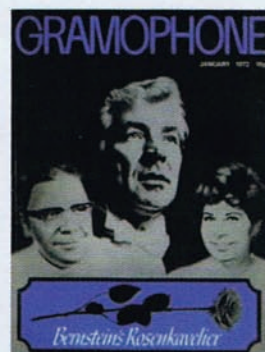
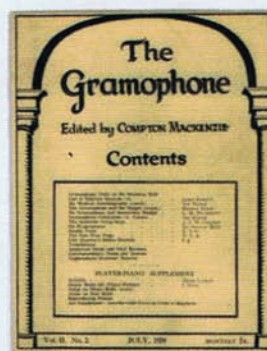
Add to the provocative A&R, first-class musicianship, invariably demonstration-worthy recording quality and the label's trademark design – usually black and white, always slipcased, and adorned not with a going-through-the-motions programme note but something altogether more challenging – and you have all the ingredients that have convinced us that this, of all years, belongs to Manfred Eicher and his wonderful ECM label. ©



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We honour the founder of the much-loved label Harmonia Mundi.

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Bernard Coutaz, the founder and patron for the past half a century of Harmonia Mundi, is unique in the record industry in that he's steered his company not as someone concerned with day-to-day A&R but as a genuinely visionary leader. We're delighted to be presenting him with a Special Achievement Award this year for instigating and fostering a truly creative atmosphere that allows his colleagues – notably those responsible for the company's A&R, Eva Coutaz and Robina Young – to make the wonderful recordings they do. Add to that a nose for business and you have a very special man indeed. One of Coutaz's early successes was luring the



English countertenor Alfred Deller to Harmonia Mundi – it was the sound of Baroque music, performed in a way close to the spirit of the time of its creation, that Coutaz believed people had a hunger for. And he was right: from those early explorations of the music of Purcell and his contemporaries, through the wonders of the French Baroque (courtesy of William Christie and Les Arts Florissants among others) to the ear-opening explorations of the Classical period from René Jacobs and colleagues, not to mention myriad other

spectacular discs, Coutaz's company has grown into a major player on a truly global stage with outposts in the USA, the UK, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland, and a distribution chain that ensures HM discs are available everywhere.

Based in one of the loveliest settings of any record company, a *Mas* or large Provençal farm house with numerous outbuildings just outside the southern French town of Arles, Harmonia Mundi not only makes recordings, but also acts as retailer with a network of HM shops throughout France and a couple in Spain too. There, far from the madding crowd and its obsession with the latest star diva or superstar pianist, music lovers can buy their music in altogether gentler surroundings. Now in his mid-eighties, Bernard Coutaz's contribution to recorded classical music has been immense: we salute him and thank him.

Classic FM Innovation Award

Tabloid tie-in with Covent Garden grabs the imagination and reaches new audiences

CLASSIC FM

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It was certainly one of the music world's most unexpected collaborative partnerships of the year: the Royal Opera House and *The Sun* uniting to give the newspaper's readers discounted tickets to *Don Giovanni*. That the iconic home of one of the most rarefied of art forms was engaged in a promotional campaign with a tabloid newspaper was enough to raise a few eyebrows; that it was actually giving over all the tickets for the opening night of the new season exclusively to *Sun* readers was a bold stroke that required as much courage as it did imagination. But in a sense, the initiative – supported by the Helen Hamlyn Trust – is perfectly in keeping with Covent Garden's many attempts to break down

perceived barriers and reach new audiences, including streaming operas to outdoor screens and cinemas, and the student standby scheme. It did reach new audiences, it challenged perceptions from both directions and *The Sun* gave more coverage to explaining an opera – including a full synopsis of *Don Giovanni* – than most papers ever do. It was such a success that it was repeated again this year with *Carmen*. And anyway, Mozart's opera did offer attendees – as *The Sun* put it – “a night of blood, betrayal, ghosts and topless totty in the story about a bed-hopping stud who is dragged to hell for his wicked ways”. Not that far from the pages of a tabloid after all.



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naïve

Editor's Choice

Stephen Kovacevich battled back from illness to master the Diabellis again

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

It was the *Diabelli* Variations that first lifted Stephen Kovacevich's career into the highest echelons, and it is the same work that has reconfirmed his place there – at least to himself. Two years ago he suffered a stroke and seemed to have recovered fully, until his playing suddenly felt different. "I lost my sense of security," he says. "It was as if I was driving a car but the controls weren't where I expected."

Reasoning that if any work would bring him back on track it would be this one, he threw himself into practising it. "I had played it at the Aldeburgh Festival and it was terrible. But I decided to fight and, revisiting the Beethoven at the Queen

I hope my story
inspires other
musicians

Elizabeth Hall the following January, there at last came a turning-point."

Crisis over, Kovacevich was playing as well as he ever has, and making new discoveries along the way. "Every centimetre of that work is inside me, but the fascinating thing is the way it has changed. It was like seeing an old friend again after a long time and he's grown and looks different."

The pianist was so encouraged that he made a new recording, for Onyx, which has been an immense success. I chose it as Disc of the Month when it came out, and it seems a natural (against strong competition) for the Editor's Choice Award. Reviewer Harriet Smith hailed it as "a disc to treasure" in her review. But it was a comment from Kovacevich's closest musical friend Martha Argerich about his current playing that has really delighted him. "She said she'd never heard me play better," he reports, adding "and I hope my story gives inspiration to other musicians who've been ill."



Young Artist of the Year

STEINWAY & SONS

DG's recent signing, Yuja Wang, is a young pianist of astonishing talent

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

"A combination of blazing technique and a rare instinct for poetry" – those were the words we wrote above the review of Yuja Wang's debut disc for Deutsche Grammophon in our August issue. In the previous issue we had featured this exceptional young pianist on our One to Watch page. It was clear to us, as to an increasingly large number of people in the music world, that she was a remarkable talent. And now we name her our 2009 Young Artist of the Year.

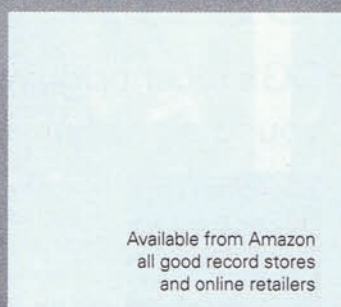
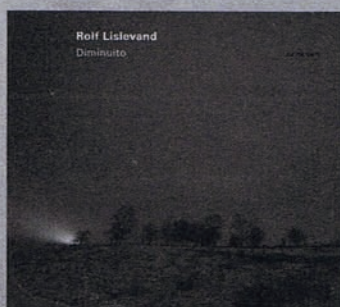
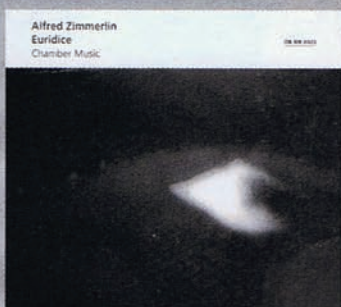
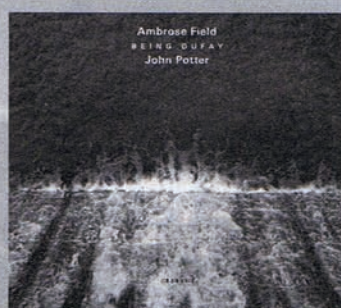
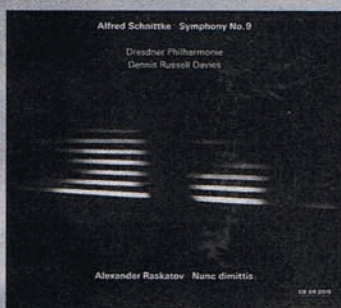
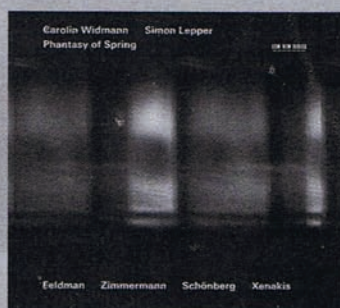
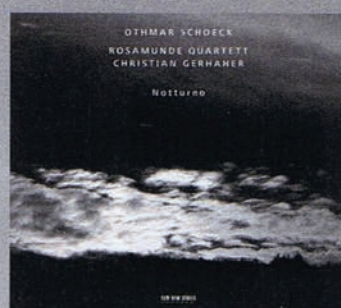
First the facts. Born in Beijing in 1987, Yuja Wang won the 2002 Aspen Music Festival's concerto competition and began studying at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia with Gary Graffman. She made her European concert

debut in 2003, with David Zinman and the Zürich Tonhalle, and her North American debut two years after that, in Ottawa, under Pinchas Zukerman. Then earlier this year she signed to DG, fulfilling a long-held ambition she had had ever since hearing Pollini playing Chopin on the iconic Yellow Label. It's an impressive career progression by any standards, but listen to her play and its speed suddenly makes perfect sense.

Her debut disc, which

featured the second piano sonatas of Chopin and Scriabin, Liszt's Piano Sonata and Etudes by Ligeti, was a well chosen and bold showcase for her talents. In the Scriabin she demonstrated a beautiful sensitivity to the music's many and varied moods, in Chopin a fiery but never reckless approach, and throughout the whole programme we are left in no doubt of her formidable technical command, at the same time, as Bryce Morrison wrote in the review, "her playing, while sharply individual, is free from all distorting idiosyncrasy or mannerism". We look forward with great excitement to following Yuja Wang's career for many years to come. ©





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and online retailers

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Johann Sebastian Bach
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Till Fellner piano

Kurtágónais
László Hortobágyi
György Kurtág jr.
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Kiev Chamber Choir

Kim Kashkashian Neharót
Betty Olivero
Tigran Mansurian
Eitan Steinberg

Heinz Holliger Romancendres
Clara Schumann

Alfred Schnittke Symphony No. 9
Alexander Raskatov Nunc dimittis
Dresdner Philharmonie
Dennis Russell Davies

Alfred Zimmerlin Euridice
Aria Quartet
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New Works for Choir and Orchestra
Tõnu Kaljuste

Rolf Lislevand Diminuito
Rolf Lislevand Ensemble

Othmar Schoeck Notturmo
Christian Gerhaher
Rosamunde Quartet

Eleni Karaindrou Dust of Time
Music for the film by Theo Angelopoulos

Ambrose Field / John Potter
Being Dufay

BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL

Purcell – The Complete Fantazias

It's nearly a decade and a half since the superb viol consort Fretwork recorded Purcell's complete Fantazias – a Recording of the Month back in 1995. With a slightly different line-up, their new version is better still. "In this new recording they bring a stronger sense of the linear progression of the music, helped by slightly quicker tempi," Julie Anne Sadie wrote in September's *Gramophone*. "Purcell's remarkable Fantazias – out of sync with their time, never widely circulated or acknowledged in his day, yet works of true genius – are definitely worth revisiting."

Interview Richard Boothby, Fretwork

They are very concentrated pieces. Most of them last a matter of three or four minutes, and yet in that very short time a tremendous amount is packed in. In that element perhaps it's the work of a young man – Purcell was only 20 when he wrote them – trying to get in as much musical brilliance as he could. But with Purcell that learning and cleverness is very lightly worn – you feel that it didn't cost him very much effort, you can feel how quickly they were written. To perform, the pieces are enormously complex, endlessly fascinating to play, there's always something new coming to your attention. For the listener, they become drawn into the internal dialogue that's going on between the parts. The Fantazias have something of the quality of the late Beethoven quartets about them in that intensity – though in a very different form, obviously.



Purcell

The Complete Fantazias
Fretwork

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7502 (9/09)

74 votes



Purcell

Ten Sonatas in Four Parts
Retrospect Trio

Linn © CKD332 (9/09)

71



'The Rise of the North Italian Violin Concerto'

Vol 3: The Golden Age
La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler

Avie © AV2154 (10/08)

64

BAROQUE VOCAL

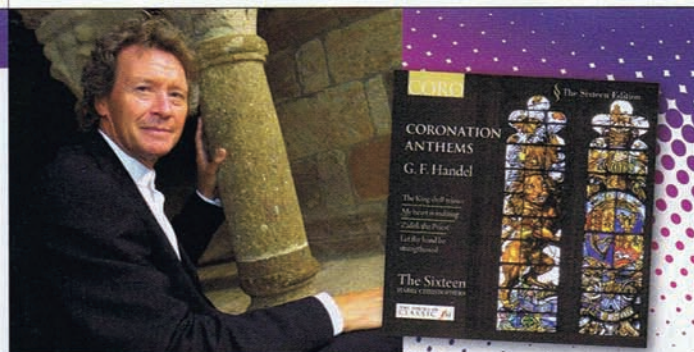
Handel – Coronation Anthems

"There are plenty of very good recordings of the four anthems that Handel composed for the coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline," wrote David Vickers of The Sixteen's new recording of these much-loved works, "but this new one leaps straight towards the top of the heap." With choral singing that is "wonderfully clear, perfectly enunciated, beautifully phrased and impeccably tuned," and "brilliantly alert, bold and lyrical" orchestral playing, Harry Christophers and his choir produced a suitably celebratory disc for their 30th anniversary year.

Interview Harry Christophers

Even with a piece as well known as *Zadok the Priest*, when people hear it freshly done, with a lot of articulation and interest within it, then it becomes a revelation. And by doing that opening really softly – in fact I did do a *diminuendo* just before the big entry – you are breaking with tradition, because tradition has, for many years, had that big *crescendo*. But I've often thought that Handel did write soft in the organ part at the beginning and then wrote *loud* when everything comes in. Musicologists are divided on it.

I think what happens with the other Coronation Anthems is that people remember the big blazing trumpet moments but they forget the inner movements, and the inner movements are the ones which seem to have been brushed aside, and yet there's so much of interest there. And particularly *My Heart is Inditing*, which is the one written for the coronation of the Queen – Handel sets a very feminine text and he sets it in an incredibly sensual way in the middle.



Handel

Coronation Anthems, etc
The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro © COR16066 (4/09)

71 votes



Lully

Psyché
Soloists; Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra & Chorus / Paul O'Dette; Stephen Stubbs

CPO © CPO777 367-2 (10/08)

66



Handel

Acis & Galatea (Cannons 1718 version)
Soloists; Dunedin Consort & Players / John Butt

Linn © CKD319 (1/09)

64

CHORAL

Elgar – The Dream of Gerontius

"The only recording of *Gerontius* in recent times to challenge, even shake, the supremacy of Barbirolli," wrote Edward Seckerson in *January*. Sir Mark Elder "draws us patiently, unerringly, into the profound mystery of the piece, judiciously weighing its theatricality against its inwardness". The Hallé's glorious recording represents the pinnacle of the orchestra's association with Elgar's monumental work under Elder. Mezzo Alice Coote and tenor Paul Groves joined the Hallé Orchestra, Choir and Youth Choir back in 2005 for a successful Proms appearance and they are joined on this recording by the ever-wonderful Bryn Terfel.

Interview Sir Mark Elder

Elgar's *Gerontius* is one of the greatest achievements of any English composer in our history. It comes from a spiritually advanced world, both musically and textually, inspired as it was by Wagner's *Parsifal*. I have a longstanding relationship with the piece, dating from the time I studied it as a set work at school, and have been privileged to perform it a great deal with my wonderful orchestra in Manchester. In many ways this recording is a summation of all that we have done together.

Gerontius has incredible imagination and is scored brilliantly for the orchestra. The many details and colour shadings need attention, but at the same time, that feeling of inexorable progress in working toward the next climax must be preserved.

A lot of music lovers have a strong attachment to the Barbirolli recording but I think it was important that the Hallé record the work again. Recording techniques and ideas about Elgar have developed and changed, and the Hallé's association with Elgar means that we should always re-examine and re-attempt his important works.



Elgar

The Dream of Gerontius

Soloists incl Paul Groves (ten), Bryn Terfel (bass-bar); Choirs; Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder
Hallé © CDHLD7520 (1/09) **98 votes**



Fauré

Requiem

Sandrine Piau (sop), Stéphane Degout (bar); Accentus Chamber Choir; French National Orchestra / Laurence Equilbey
Naïve © V5137 (8/09) **87**



'A New Heaven'

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers
UCJ © 179 5732 (5/09) **73**

CONCERTO

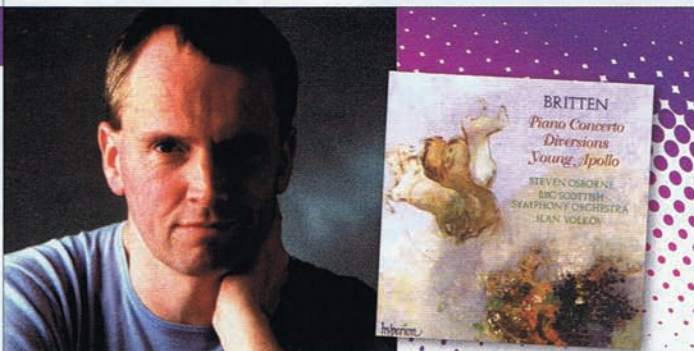
Britten – Piano Concerto

Steven Osborne is a pianist who until recently has been somewhat in the shadow of more famous contemporaries. Yet 2009 has seemed to mark an especial breakthrough in Osborne's career, with a superb disc of Rachmaninov's Preludes and this marvellous selection of Britten rarities. The latter disc prompted *Gramophone* critic Arnold Whittall to write: "Steven Osborne yields nothing to the great Sviatoslav Richter in the punchiness and fine-tuned filigree of his playing...Osborne and his colleagues make the best possible case for pieces which have tended to be placed on the outer fringes of the Britten canon." For existing Osborne fans this is a must; it's bound to create many more.

Interview Steven Osborne

These are all rarely-performed Britten works, but the one I feel most proud of having brought to a wider public is *Diversions*. It's an absolute jewel, there's so much quality and such an array of characters in that amazing piece. I've only played it once in concert, in Germany. The first time is always difficult: you have to feel your way into the structure. It wasn't my greatest performance and the audience was slightly bemused, to be honest! But I long to play it more. The Concerto is a big, fun piece. I wish I'd be asked to do both of these works more frequently in concert but it hasn't yet happened, even since the recording has come out.

I'm so glad it happened but the recording was actually the inspired idea of Mike Spring at Hyperion. There's so much repertoire to learn that I don't get much time to research; so it's often non-performing musicians who know the most about these things, perhaps because they have the time!



Britten

Piano Concerto

Steven Osborne (pf); BBC Scottish SO / Ilan Volkov
Hyperion © CDA67625 (10/08) **122 votes**



Beethoven

The Complete Piano Concertos
Richard Goode (pf); Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer
Nonesuch © 3 7559 79928-3 (2/09) **102**



Mozart

Violin Concertos

Giuliano Carmignola (vn); Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado
Archiv © 2 477 7371AH2 (9/08) **95**

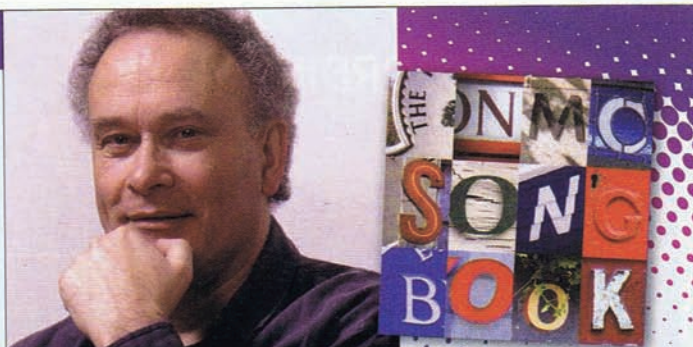
CONTEMPORARY

The NMC Songbook

In his review of the "The NMC Songbook", David Gutman took the opportunity to highlight a few of his personal favourites: "In Hugh Wood's George Herbert setting, careful workmanship does not preclude a Tippettian sense of exaltation. I hear a similar sense of engagement in Simon Holt's unaccompanied declamation (evoking a real-life incident in rural India) and Brian Elias's more subdued John Clare solo. The way in which the items are juxtaposed can be crucial too; the cooler limpidity of Howard Skempton and Gavin Bryars is doubly welcome in context." DSG also pointed out that "only a critic or a fool would listen to the entire collection at a sitting. Much better to study at leisure what should prove to be an important cultural document."

Interview Colin Matthews

The primary aim of "The NMC Songbook" was to inject new life into British song-writing. Many of the composers have since gone on to expand their songs into song-cycles, which is wonderful. Of course, it is too early to say what the wider implications of this will be, but the early signs would indicate that this is an exciting time for British art song. Most contributions were surprising in a number of ways: it was particularly interesting to note how a significant number of the composers seemed to be on their "best behaviour" – as if they were slightly daunted by the "historic" nature of the recordings. Of course, this may also have been because there isn't a strong tradition of British art song in the 20th and 21st centuries and so there is very little to conform with or rebel against. The "Songbook" was a massive undertaking for NMC and its success has led us to consider further ambitious commissioning projects. We have exciting plans!



The NMC Songbook

Various artists
NMC © 4 NMCD150
67 votes



D Matthews

Orchestral Works
Guy Johnston (vc)
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Rumon Gamba
Chandos © CHAN10487 63



Lindberg

Orchestral works
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Sakari Oramo
Onine © ODE1124-2 60

DVD

The Copenhagen Ring

When this came through on the CD release sheets under the innocuous-sounding title "The Copenhagen Ring", there was no hint of the DVD event that this would become. A cast consisting of solid or up-and-coming Wagnerians rather than stars, a house not known for that composer and a conductor (Michael Schönwandt) who has never quite broken into the highest echelon of international maestri did not bode for anything special. Yet this superb, thought-provoking production in which every performer sings and acts their heart out proved a mesmerising experience, one which led Mike Ashman, in a full-page review, to rhapsodise about a production that "finds more heartbreaking emotion in Wagner's drama than almost any since Patrice Chereau's."

Interview Stig Andersen

Having been a member of the Royal Danish Opera ensemble throughout my career, it was very special to me to do *The Ring* at home. When you have to gather soloists from all over the world the rehearsal process often tends to be a little rushed. But here, with so many local singers, we all took our time and it felt calm. And so we all felt very involved, like a true theatrical ensemble, also because the director was open and happy to discuss ideas. And so the stage relationships all felt ingrained, and it felt like teamwork in the best sense. It also helped me that our conductor led quite a delicate reading, since the new house at Copenhagen lets you hear every detail very clearly, even if you sometimes lose some richness in the sound. I always try to work hard with texture and especially colour in the voice, and in this house with this orchestral interpretation I was really able, I hope, to put that across.



WAGNER

Der Ring des Nibelungen
Royal Danish Opera / Michael Schönwandt
Decca © 7 DVD 074 3264DH7
82 votes



Britten

Billy Budd
LSO / Sir Charles Mackerras;
directed by Basil Coleman
Decca © DVD 074 3256DH 79



Birtwistle

The Minotaur
Royal Opera / Antonio Pappano;
directed by Stephen Langridge
Opus Arte © DVD OA1000D 75

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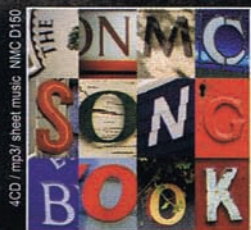
BENJAMIN BRITTEN



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In memoriam Dennis Brain
Rondo Concertante - Untitled Fragment
Variations for Solo Piano
SANDRINE PIAU soprano - MICHAEL COLLINS clarinet
ROLF HIND piano - NORTHERN SYMPHONY / THOMAS ZEHETMAIR

Britten vodcast: www.youtube.com/nmcrecordings



FINALIST
The CLASSIC 5th
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Awards 2009

NMC SONGBOOK

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beautifully done' GUARDIAN

'An invaluable overview of British music ...
beautifully sung and played by more than
two dozen top performers' THE OBSERVER

'One of the most imaginative anniversary
projects I have seen' RADIO 3 CD REVIEW

Songbook vodcast: www.youtube.com/nmcrecordings



SIMON HOLT a book of colours - Black Lanterns
Klop's Last Bite - Nigredo - Tauromaquia ROLF HIND piano

JEREMY DALE ROBERTS Croquis (String Trio)
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EARLY MUSIC

Song of Songs

This collection of settings by composers including Palestrina, Guerrero, Gombert, Victoria and Lassus of words from the biblical Song of Songs was a sumptuous and beautifully performed highlight of last year's choral releases. *Gramophone's* Peter Quantrill praised the "quiet good taste and stylistically homogeneous approach of Stile Antico" – the young British vocal ensemble who have assembled and recorded this collection, and who demonstrate freshness of voice and an exquisite and sensitive approach to interpretation throughout the programme.

Interview Matthew O'Donovan

There's a huge amount to choose from in terms of the Song of Songs repertoire. This is a programme we developed over a few years – in fact it was the very first programme we put on in a concert in 2001, although we've changed it a little since then. It was an all-Continental idea – partly because there is very little Song of Songs English music at all, at least until the 17th century. We really just wanted to assemble a variety of pieces which displayed some of the different ways which composers had dealt with the themes of the Song of Songs.

I think composers did often tend to be at their most colourful when setting the Song of Songs – it's a slightly generalised thing to say but it seems to have brought out a particular creative streak in composers.



'Song of Songs'

Stile Antico

Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7489 (8/09)

55 votes



Byrd

Hodie Simon Petrus

The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood

Hyperion © CDA67653 (4/09)

51



Morales

Magnificat. Motets. Lamentations

Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice

Hyperion © CDA67694 (11/08)

41

HISTORIC ARCHIVE

Berlioz – Les Troyens

The hand of history lies heavy on this recording, enshrining as it does the classic (English language) 1957 Covent Garden performances that established Berlioz's epic work as an opera house favourite. Jon Vickers would later refine and deepen his classic Aeneas but there's a definite rush of excitement flowing through the entire cast of a jewel newly uncovered. "It is," wrote Patrick O'Connor in *Gramophone*, "difficult to approach this historic broadcast without some feeling of awe."

Interview Joan Carlyle

The Royal Opera in those days was a real company – there were very few guest artists. In this *Troyens* only Blanche Thebom (pictured) wasn't a company member. We were all like a family and so we all shared the great excitement of the discovery of this great masterpiece – and also all the work. It's very long, so we had to rehearse all over London in strange little venues to get in all the rehearsal time it needed. John Gielgud, who delivered a beautiful period production, was at his wits' end when it came to staging *The Royal Hunt and Storm*. He paced up and down crying, "Why did this man write so much music?" Finally he decided that I should come in as Cupid and fire an arrow into the cave to which Dido and Aeneas had retired. He gave me five Irish wolfhounds for that moment. Unfortunately one night one of the dogs, who was new, decided to break away and dive into the cave after the arrow! Jon Vickers, who was so intense, Amy Shuard and Thebom were all fantastic. Thebom had wonderful hair that reached the floor. She kept it pinned up until the end, when she'd turn and let it cascade down like a waterfall – an amazing effect! As for Kubelík, to me, at only 27, he was inspiring, sometimes frighteningly so.



Berlioz

Les Troyens

Covent Garden Opera / Rafael Kubelík

Testament © SBT4 1443 (10/09)

91



R Strauss

Der Rosenkavalier

Bavarian State Opera / Carlos Kleiber

Orfeo d'Or © C581 083D (4/09)

81



Wagner

The Mastersingers of Nuremberg

Sadler's Wells Opera / Reginald Goodall

Chandos © CHAN3148 (8/08)

81

HISTORIC REISSUE

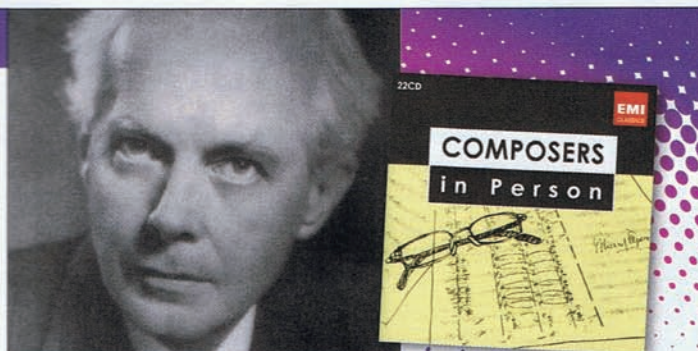
Composers in Person

The best archive projects are guided by a singularity of vision, as with EMI's multi-volume "Composers in Person" series. It brought to the listening public composers – from Bartók (pictured) to Villa-Lobos – playing and conducting their own music, among them many recordings never before heard outside of private collections. It was a labour of love for its architect Ken Jagger and his colleague (and ex-Gramophone editor) Malcolm Walker. So to have all 22 volumes gathered in one low-price box is a veritable treasure trove, to be pored over and loved for years to come.

Interview Malcolm Walker

When Ken Jagger joined EMI Classics in the early part of 1990 it was his idea to draw on the reservoir of composers performing their own works. But he wasn't a great gramophile, so that's where I helped him. Having gone through the obvious sources, next came the big project of finding whether recordings still actually existed – much had disappeared. We tapped every source we could, from EMI naturally, to the Bibliothèque Nationale and the National Sound Archive. Ken also developed quite a network of private collectors who contributed material.

The great surprise to me was the Lehár, the best-seller of the series. The *Merry Widow* concert overture was recorded days after the premiere, which was held for his 70th birthday – wonderful! And Federico Mompou – what a pianist, and how that recording captures a sense of Paris in the 1930s! But most of these discs had been deleted for a decade so it now seemed ideal for a collectors' box. Incidentally, as a former Gramophone editor, this will be the first Awards I've attended since 1983, so it's nice to return as a winner!



'Composers in Person'

Various artists

EMI Ⓢ Ⓜ 217575-2 (2/09)

90 votes



'The Charming Maverick'

Fritz Kreisler

EMI Ⓢ Ⓜ 265042-2 (8/09)

81



'The Record of Singing, Vols 1-4'

Various artists

EMI Ⓢ Ⓜ 228956-2 (3/09)

70

INSTRUMENTAL

Debussy – Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4

The culmination of Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's complete Debussy piano music cycle is a triumphant success. Dedicated to the *Etudes* and *Images*, the recording boasts "ravishing colour shadings and articulations", according to Jed Distler writing in December 2008, and achieves highs of technical virtuosity while preserving the works' imaginative qualities in "emotionally generous" performances. Bavouzet was narrowly beaten to the Instrumental Award last year for Volume 2 of his Debussy series by Paul Lewis's Record of the Year-winning Beethoven piano sonatas. This year, he rightly takes the Award – as much in recognition of the cycle as a whole as of this excellent recording.

Interview Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

This Debussy series was a very dear project for me. French pianists naturally often specialise in French repertoire but I am not sure how large a part my nationality played in arriving at an interpretative truth, especially in comparison with the hard work I invested. I don't believe, however, there is a single, definitive interpretation of any work. Rather I feel I have arrived at my own personal truth.

I have not always been drawn to Debussy's music. When I was a student he seemed an enigma and it was only much later that I developed my own perspective. I have certainly reached a better understanding of the complex, multi-layered scores in the new Chandos recordings.

Recording the cycle has enabled me to see connections between individual works that might otherwise have escaped me. Through learning and performing these works, solutions to interpretative problems can be discovered.



Debussy

Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10497 (12/08) 114 votes



Rachmaninov

Preludes

Steven Osborne

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67700 (6/09) 107



Debussy

Piano Works

Nelson Frierie

Decca Ⓢ 478 1111DH (4/09) 98

onyx

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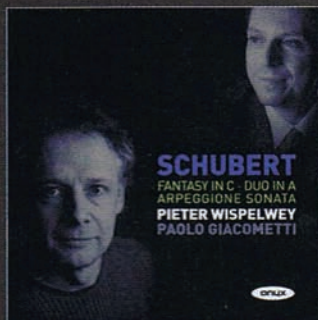
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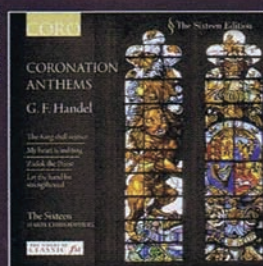
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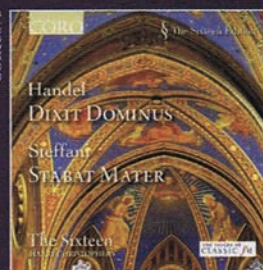


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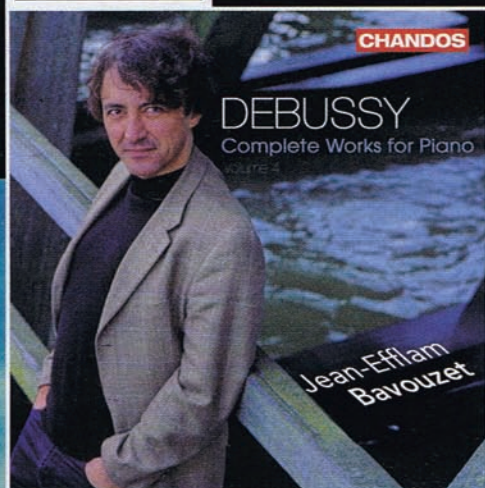
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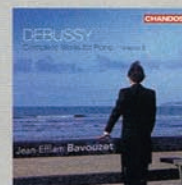
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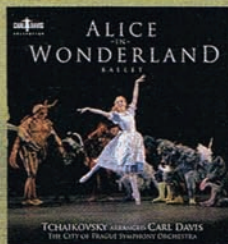
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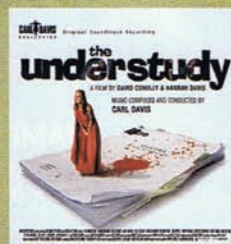
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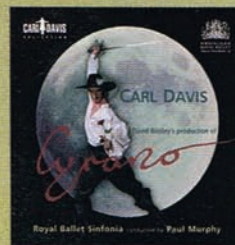
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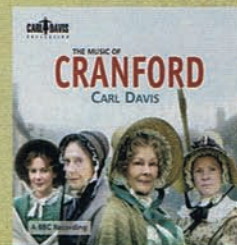
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OPERA

Puccini – Madama Butterfly

Who said the days of recording opera in the studio were over? They may be less frequent, but this *Butterfly* is in many ways wonderfully old-fashioned. A stellar cast and conductor gathered in a studio to record a mainstream opera favourite – and yet the resultant performance is marvellously fresh. Despite Angela Gheorghiu having never sung the title-role on stage, Patrick O'Connor found her *Butterfly* “her best Puccini role since Magda in *La Rondine* more than a decade ago.” It is, he found, a recording “to set alongside the great recordings of the past”.

Interview Angela Gheorghiu

This was one of the most wonderful experiences I have ever had. I was singing for maybe two weeks, three hours per day, with full emotion and yet loved every minute of it. The orchestra was incredible under Tony Pappano. I once said to Tony, “Let’s record the highlights first”. He replied, “What highlights? Everything is highlights in *Butterfly*!”

Interestingly we recorded it out of order because Jonas Kaufmann was only there for the final three days. And although he’d just been singing *Carmen* he brought to the sessions a freshness, which suited the dynamic, because *Butterfly* is so intense and Pinkerton has a different perspective.

We all treated the opera like a tragic love poem, a lyric tragedy. I surprised myself by smiling in the streets every day despite the intensity. But then *Butterfly* for most of the opera thinks she’s living a fairy-tale, she is optimistic until almost the last moment, and I drew from that energy of hers.

INDEPENDENT
CLASSICAL
SPECIALISTS



Puccini *Madama Butterfly*
Soloists incl Angela Gheorghiu (sop);
Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia /
Antonio Pappano

EMI © 264187-2 (3/09) **97 votes**

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Britten

Owen Wingrave
Soloists; City of London
Symphony / Richard Hickox

Chandos © 2 CHAN10473 (9/08) **93**



Bellini

I Capuletti e i Montecchi
Soloists incl Anna Netrebko (sop); Vienna
Symphony Orchestra / Fabio Luisi

DG © 2 477 8031GH2 (3/09) **89**

ORCHESTRAL

Tchaikovsky – Manfred Symphony

Reviewer Edward Seckerson was moved by this release from one of the most exciting of young conductors (indeed, a previous Young Artist of the Year). “Petrenko’s Byronic petulance makes something really stirring of the self-loathing – Tchaikovsky’s as much as that of Byron’s antihero,” he wrote, adding, “The playing is lovely...Petrenko also keeps his head in the inferno of the finale, emphasising Tchaikovsky the classicist in the hard-working fugue.” The Petrenko era in Liverpool continues to yield rich dividends, he and his players clearly set on catching up with the Hallé as the UK orchestral success story of the day.

Interview Vasily Petrenko

Manfred is extremely connected to the Russian sound – one of the main themes played by the whole string section simply has to be done with that in mind. Of course that sound is in my blood, but technically it’s to do with keeping the long notes alive, keeping the pressure on the bow until the very tip, the ability to think in terms of long phrases, of four- or eight-bar structures rather than two or three bars. It’s also crucial to ensure every desk of the strings has the same impact. Because in Russia all string-players train as soloists and so keep the soloist’s skill of listening to themselves playing, but at the same time blend inside the orchestras, so you need this charisma. This is the work where Tchaikovsky, who had found melodic beauty and was then treated so badly inside his country, asked why this had happened. He opened his soul through sound here. I’m also glad we included his *Voyevoda*, a great piece so neglected the players had never even played it. It deserves a huge reassessment.



Tchaikovsky

Manfred Symphony
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /
Vasily Petrenko

Naxos © 8 570568 (1/09) **108 votes**

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Mahler

Symphony No 4
Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics © CCSSA26109 (4/09)

102



Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 2 & 7
Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä

BIS © BIS-SACD1816 (1/09)

100



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Manfred Symphony

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Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
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RECITAL

Martinů – Julietta Fragments

Martinů extracted these three substantial fragments from his opera two years after completing it, with the aim of using it to secure a production of the full work in France. That didn't happen and the fragments were never performed – but 70 years later, under the baton of Sir Charles Mackerras, a man who has devoted himself to getting to the heart of Czech music, the piece received its premiere and was captured in superb sound by Supraphon. Not only was it a rich musical feast – the soloists wonderfully led by Magdalena Kožená – it was also a poignant occasion, the last concert Mackerras plans to give with the Czech Philharmonic in their homeland. As *Gramophone's* Guy Rickards wrote at the time: "I cannot recommend this scintillating disc highly enough."

Interview Sir Charles Mackerras

The Rudolfinum, the concert hall in Prague, is beautiful for recording and the Czech Philharmonic is a great orchestra – there is no question about that – and one that is particularly good at playing Czech music. That sound is really unique. Other orchestras are equally good but somehow the strings, the brass and the woodwind of the Czech Philharmonic have this music in their blood. I always say about Prague, "Meine Prager verstehen mich", which is what Mozart once said. I'm not comparing myself to Mozart, but it's good to be able to quote him and speak the truth at the same time.



Martinů

Julietta Fragments

Magdalena Kožená (mez); Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras

Supraphon © SU3994-2 (6/09) **53 votes**

The CLASSIC /
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Awards 2009



'Cielo e mar'

Rolando Villazón (ten); Verdi Symphony Orchestra / Daniele Callegari

DG © 477 7224GH (7/08) **47**



Haydn

Italian Arias

Thomas Quasthoff (bass-bar); Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Gottfried von der Goltz

DG © 477 7469GH (4/09) **45**

SOLO VOCAL

Schumann – Dichterliebe

Gerald Finley might well be considering moving into the Dorchester Hotel's ballroom, so often does he mount its stage to pick up his latest *Gramophone* Award! This is a bass-baritone at the height of his powers, fully inhabiting whatever repertoire he happens to be exploring. Richard Wigmore reviewed Finley's disc of *Dichterliebe* and assorted other Heine settings last November: "One of the most beautifully sung and intensely experienced performances on disc of Schumann's cycle of rapture, disillusion and tender regret," he wrote, going on to praise it in terms as glowing as the recording itself.

Interview Gerald Finley

Julius Drake and I have a wonderful partnership and hold similar views about *Dichterliebe*. I've known the work since I was a very young singer. It was my first song-cycle ever; I performed it for my farewell to Ottawa at 19! It's all about raw emotions, so a young singer feels an immediate affinity. But all these years later, I felt I could bring a perspective on those emotions that now have a depth of colour and experience.

Also, Julius and I both wanted to explore the silences in *Dichterliebe*; its clarity is in rhythm and melody and silence. Nikolaus Harnoncourt once taught me that silence in music, especially Schumann, is almost as powerful as the notes. And just as there is *rubato* in music, we can find *rubato* in the silence – a punctuation for what has gone previously but also contemplation for what can then be, not least for Schumann himself. There's a breath-catching, an anticipation. So we stretched and explored and experimented with that.



Schumann

Dichterliebe and other Heine Settings

Gerald Finley (bar), Julius Drake (pf)

Hyperion © CDA67676 (11/08) **67 votes**

The CLASSIC /
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009



Brahms. Schumann

Lieder

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (mez), Julius Drake (pf)

Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0024 (1/09) **63**



'Songs My Mother Taught Me'

Magdalena Kožená (mez), Malcolm Martineau (pf)

DG © 477 6665GH (A/08) **60**

The CLASSIC FM
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

Recording of the Year

Four French players, three French composers, and a ravishing Gramophone success

That the Debussy and Ravel string quartets – a regular pairing on records – are joined by a rare outing for Fauré's ethereal late Quartet is not the only reason that this disc from these four young French string-players is so special. Reviewing it in *Gramophone* last December, Rob Cowan identified "a fluidity to the Ebène's playing... that suits the music's character, a mood of wistfulness that the Ravel especially benefits from". Quatuor Ebène, he went on, "scores highest for an almost palpable sense of wonder" in these works.

Such a critical response was by no means unique upon this disc's release last year and the quartet's triumph with their Virgin Classics debut in these Awards is merely the pinnacle of a series of highlights in these musicians' still short career. Graduates from the BBC's invaluable New Generation Artists scheme, they won a series of high-profile chamber music awards and competitions before they became worthy winners of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2007.

Part of the "fluidity" to their playing identified by RC must be due in part to their sideline as jazz musicians – the "other Ebène", as they describe this intriguing parallel career, in which they offer complete, integrated performances of jazz standards and improvisations, along with a drummer and sound engineer. "Our jazz-playing," explained leader Pierre Colombet, "enables us to look at the score from a different

perspective and to see classical music as a kind of improvisation."

When a panel of *Gramophone* critics gathered in August to discuss the merits of each category winner and elect a Recording of the Year, it was consistently this quartet's reading of the Fauré that drew the most enthusiastic response around the table. Going back to Rob Cowan's original December review of the disc, he noted that it was "a brilliant idea to include Fauré's late Quartet", identifying it as a linchpin for all three works, Ravel having composed his Quartet in Fauré's class as a 10th anniversary tribute to Debussy's Quartet. And it's true that the Ebène bravely and successfully enter a crowded marketplace with the works by the young Debussy and Ravel, the Fauré adding yet more value to this disc. "Fauré's Quartet responds well to the Ebène's sensitised approach," remarked our reviewer.

Quatuor Ebène now march on to other shades and nationalities of the unfathomably rich quartet repertoire. But their identification with these works by their three great compatriots will endure through their career as an indelible calling-card. While the Ravel was the first work they performed together, they tackled the Debussy only six months before making this recording, and worked long and hard to penetrate the enigmas of the Fauré. Nevertheless they give the impression of having been born into this music, breathing its rarefied air and yet making each work a unique, compelling listening experience. ●

Their identification with these three works will endure through their career as an indelible calling-card





Interview Raphaël Merlin, Ebène cellist

Making this recording was a fascinating process of contrasts for us. We had played the Ravel since we formed a decade ago and by now have played it more than 300 times. So there has been a lot of thinking, of practice, of interplay, and by this point we don't think of structure or aesthetic, it's just our interpretation, here. Ready for the perfect moment to record it. The Debussy was the opposite: we'd never played it before the recording, so it is fresh, new, almost our first impression. The Fauré is the centrepiece and is very rarely heard in concert. It's so magical and the more you listen the more you hear so much about the spirit, about the heart. Where the Ravel and Debussy are in their own ways intense, this is the final piece of an old man who is totally serene. We're very proud to make this piece hopefully better known through this recording.

CHAMBER



Debussy. Fauré. Ravel String Quartets *Quatuor Ebène*

Virgin © 519045-2 (12/08)

135 votes



Schumann Violin Sonatas

Carolin Widmann (vn), Dénes Várjon (pf)
ECM New Series © ② 476 6744 (A/08)

110



Brahms

String Quartets – Op 51 No 1; Op 67
Takács Quartet

Hyperion © CDA67552 (12/08)

106

Sergey Rachmaninov:
the composer counted
The Bells among his
favourite works



RINGING THE CHANGES

Rachmaninov's **The Bells** expresses the composer's deep vein of Russian nationalism and his characteristic grim fatalism. **Geoffrey Norris** has been listening to the available recordings

Bells were in Rachmaninov's very blood. For him, as for many a Russian, they carried a resonance that went beyond the mere noise they made and summoned up from within him all sorts of deep associations. They triggered memories of childhood in the Russian countryside. They stimulated emotions of melancholy and joy.

Bells, like the sounds of nature and the silence of solitude, were an integral part of the limitless, rich landscape that provided Rachmaninov with so much of the inspiration for his music, particularly when he was at the family's Ivanovka estate, deep in Russia's rural heartland. So it is no surprise that he should have responded so readily when someone sent him a Russian version of a gothic poem by Edgar Allan Poe with the title "The Bells". It had been translated – or, rather, transformed – into Russian by the Symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont, who, aside from eliminating the repetitive "bells, bells, bells", "knells, knells, knells" and so on that make the Poe verse patterns so distinctive, gave them a Russian flavour by adding to Poe's bright, innocent first verse a reference to sleighs, at the same time darkening it with hints of inevitable oblivion. He made the third verse, in which Poe admittedly speaks of terror, into a virtual vision of the apocalypse.

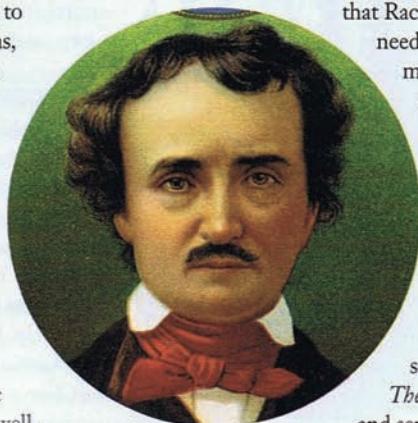
But the sentiments of Balmont's text struck a chord with Rachmaninov. He was, by nature, a fatalist. His music has strong undercurrents of a struggle with, or acquiescence and resignation before, an unseen force over which there is no control. This is accentuated by his preoccupation with the "Dies irae", the Roman Catholic chant for the dead whose contours permeate much of his music and form part of the musical fabric of "The Bells" as well. Poe's original poem and Balmont's version both trace a span from birth to death, linking a particular type of bell with

each stage of existence: silver, tinkling bells for birth and youth; mellow golden ones for maturity and marriage; bronze for fear and despair; iron for death. With Rachmaninov's acute sensitivity to the inner feelings that bells could evoke, coupled with his fixation with destiny, Balmont's text was a godsend. Rachmaninov wrote the score fairly swiftly in the spring and summer of 1913, partly in Rome, partly back at the Russian house in Ivanovka, and he conducted the premiere in Moscow later that year.

The Bells – "Kolokola" in Russian – is a symphony, with all the substance and weight of argument that the term implies. It is by no means merely decorative. As Rachmaninov had already shown in the Second Symphony (1906-07), he had a secure skill in crafting broad structures from small, potent motifs. A similar approach governs the architecture of *The Bells*, with thematic cross-references and with the "Dies irae" recurring in various guises as a focal idea and as a reminder that death will be the ultimate outcome. The four verses of the poem correspond to the four movements of a symphony, with an opening *allegro*, a slow movement to follow and a fiery *scherzo*. The crucial deviation from convention

that Rachmaninov had to reckon with was that the finale also needed to be slow because of its death-orientated subject matter, but there was already a precedent for that in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. This probably resonated with him all the more strongly in Rome, where he was staying in an apartment on the Piazza di Spagna in which Tchaikovsky himself had once resided.

The Bells is scored for a large orchestra, with chorus and three soloists – tenor, soprano and baritone. Rachmaninov's experience of writing for the solo voice was already wide, both in terms of songs and in his pair of operas *Francesca da Rimini* and *The Miserly Knight*, premiered in 1906. His technique and sensibility to word-setting were well established. His familiarity with choruses, however, was narrower. He had conducted choirs, and had used one in *Francesca da Rimini*,



Edgar Allan Poe: the poet behind *The Bells*

though it has no words to sing – only the muffled wailing of the lost souls buffeted by eternal winds in the nether reaches of Hell. He had composed some choruses for women's or children's voices in the 1890s, had written the cantata *Spring* in 1902 for baritone, chorus and orchestra, and had turned his hand to unaccompanied ecclesiastical music in the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* (1910). But none of those comes anywhere near the virtuosity of the choral writing in *The Bells*. It is as grippingly effective as it is demanding on the singers, with much division of parts and tricky chromaticism to contend with as well. When Sir Henry Wood, one of Rachmaninov's most ardent champions, performed *The Bells* in Sheffield in 1936, Rachmaninov revised and simplified the choral parts of the particularly taxing third movement, because, as Wood has it in his autobiography, "it was found in previous performances that there were too many notes and words to be chorally effective". More likely, the choir was simply not able to cope.

Nowadays, performances generally adhere to Rachmaninov's fearsome original, although – rather perversely in the circumstances – one of the 14 discs under consideration here does use the revision that Rachmaninov made for Wood. More of that later.

As to the orchestration, one interesting thing about the score of *The Bells* is that Rachmaninov seldom uses them.

Kyrril Kondrashin: made the earliest available disc

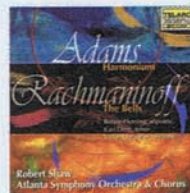
He calls for "four tubular bells" in the orchestral line-up but they are deployed only in the second movement, and then only for measured strokes over a matter of a total of 17 bars. Aside from these touches of colour and solemnity, he has no need of them. As can readily be heard in the Second Piano Sonata, on which Rachmaninov was working at the same time as *The Bells*, he was perfectly capable of creating the sounds and tumult of bells simply by means of texture and timbre. He had even tried it, rather less successfully, in his early *Fantaisie-tableaux* for two pianos (1893), where the finale's Russian Orthodox chant is accompanied and decorated by piano figuration redolent of bells. Rimsky-Korsakov criticised his treatment, and rightly so. But, by the time he came to the Second Piano Sonata, Rachmaninov's ear was much more finely tuned, as it was in *The Bells*. To be sure, he uses such bell-like instruments as the celesta and glockenspiel, and even on occasion a tam-tam. But much more often the ear will hear campanological sonorities when they are not actually there. They are a cunning illusion. The refined understanding of orchestral timbre that had already distinguished the Second Symphony and *The Isle of the Dead* (1909) reached new heights in *The Bells*, Rachmaninov realising that the combination of a single piano note with one on the horn could

Vladimir Ashkenazy: recorded *The Bells* twice

THE ENGLISH CHOICE

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra / Robert Shaw

Telarc © CD80365
Robert Shaw uses Fanny S Copeland's English translation, which, even if it dilutes the impact of the text, provides a springboard for a performance that has propulsion, poise and perceptiveness of musical character in equal measure.



THE BUDGET CHOICE

National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland / Alexander Anissimov

Naxos © 8 550805
This interpretation easily bears comparison with others at higher price, and at super-budget level is a real bargain. It has terror and tenderness, and, with an assured chorus, Anissimov's ear for Rachmaninov's orchestral palette pays dividends in sharply characterised playing.



create a ringing clangour. Likewise, chimes can seem to come from plucked lower string chords against the brass, or the bassoons, harp and double basses oscillating with harmonies on the piano. *The Bells* is a score of astonishing bravura, calling for triple woodwind and brass, six horns and a range of percussion, but colour is precisely and subtly applied with minute skill to form a powerfully evocative tapestry.

So, there is a lot to consider in approaching an interpretation of *The Bells*, both as performers and as listeners. I have decided to group this survey of recordings according to the nationality of the performers taking part, which in certain cases, though not rigidly so, is more revealing. The first category consists of those where the artists are entirely Russian (four recordings). The second, largest category, is where soloists or conductor might be Russian but where the orchestra and chorus are not (seven). The third category is of those recordings where the artists are entirely non-Russian, in fact entirely anglophone, and where, in two cases, *The Bells* is sung in English (three).

RECORDINGS BY RUSSIANS

A Russian chorus has a head-start in *The Bells*. If the enunciation of the text comes naturally, rather than through the offices of a language coach and phonetic transliteration, there is one less obstacle in surmounting Rachmaninov's technical hurdles. This, of course, does not bar *The Bells* from being performed superbly by non-Russians, as will become clear in the next category. But it is a help. Kirill Kondrashin's recording with the Moscow Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra and RSFSR Academic Russian Chorus on Melodiya is actually the earliest of these 14 versions, dating to 1962. It has a direct and stirring impact, though the panic of the third movement is less intense than on other recordings, and the soprano in the second movement veers sharpwards at the



passionate climax, a passage in which tuning is notoriously difficult to maintain, mainly because Rachmaninov's chromatic harmonic palette in the orchestra seems at that point to tug against the soprano line. Even when sopranos are spot-on in intonation, it can sound as though they are not, but here Elizaveta Shumskaya does stray just a fraction over the edge.

Mikhail Pletnev's disc with the Russian National Orchestra and Moscow State Chamber Choir on DG is one of the more recent, from 1999, and initially sounds promising, with crisp, light, glistening

The
composer's
understanding of
orchestral timbre
reached new heights in
The Bells

orchestral playing and an ardent tenor (Sergei Larin) who finds ways of grading the dynamics expressively in a role that sometimes generates the "can belto" style. The orchestral balance is good, the detail pointed, but there is only quelled ardour in Marina Mescheriakova's singing in the second movement and – the main point of contention here – Pletnev adopts the simplified choral parts for the third movement.

They were merely an expedient for a 1936 English chorus, not a legacy for eternity, and they certainly lack the full pungency of the original.

Valeri Polyansky, conducting the Russian State Symphony Orchestra and Cappella on a 1998 Chandos disc, blends lyricism with urgency, but Evgeny Svetlanov's recording with the USSR Symphony Orchestra and Yurlov Russian Choir on Regis – which is my top choice for *The Bells* –

is electrifying. This was the last work that Svetlanov conducted in London, only days before his death in 2002, and I heard him do it. Although he was evidently ill, his mastery of the score was still invincible. Yes, the actual recording quality of this 1979 disc might not be as sophisticated as more modern ones but the power of the interpretation shines through, and all his forces – orchestra, soloists and chorus – are with him.

Above all, Svetlanov has a feel for the music's flexibility. It flows, even though, in the slow movements, he is by far the most leisurely conductor on the

David Wilson-Johnson:
revels in the Russian

stopwatch. He takes his cue directly from the music but heightens it expressively. He takes risks in the alarm-ridden third movement that pay off dramatically. The atmosphere of the finale has the chilling trudge and pall of encroaching death, with that wonderful enharmonic shift from C sharp minor to D flat major at the very end (backed here by the *ad lib* organ) sparking a frisson that no others match.

MIXED RUSSIAN AND NON-RUSSIAN PERFORMERS

Top ranking for an English singer singing Russian goes to David Wilson-Johnson on Neeme Järvi's 1986 Chandos recording with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Chorus. Wilson-Johnson understands the importance of luxuriating in those "zh", "shch" consonants and of rolling his Rs and making his Ls liquid, but alas the rest of the recording is fairly generalised, woolly and not really up to the mark,

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY



DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1962 Moscow PO / Kondrashin	Melodiya © MELCD100 0840 (10/96*)
1975 LSO / Previn	EMI © 2 381513-2 (10/89*)
1979 USSR SO / Svetlanov	Regis © RRC1144
1980 St Louis SO / Slatkin	Vox © 3 CD3X3002
1984 Concertgebouw Orch / Ashkenazy	London © 3 455 798-2LC3 (2/94*)
1986 RSNO / N Järvi	Chandos © CHAN8476 (2/87)
1991 Danish Nat Rad SO / Kitajenko	Chandos © CHAN8966 (2/92)
1992 Philadelphia Orch / Dutoit	Decca Eloquence © 476 7702 (8/94*)
1995 Atlanta SO / Shaw	Telarc © CD80365 (4/97)
1997 Nat SO of Ireland / Anissimov	Naxos © 8 550805 (8/01)
1998 Russian St SO / Polyansky	Chandos © CHAN9759 (2/00); Brilliant © 2 8532
1999 Russian Nat Orch / Pletnev	DG © 471 029-2GH (8/01)
2002 Czech PO / Ashkenazy	Exton © OVCL00087
2006 Cologne Rad SO / Bychkov	Profil © PH07028 (10/07)

with a chorus poor on diction and positioned distantly so that it seems to act more as a backdrop than as a major protagonist. Charles Dutoit's performance (Decca, 1992) with the Philadelphia Orchestra, an ensemble with which Rachmaninov himself was closely associated, is notable in having the soprano Alexandrina Pendatchanska, tenor Kaludi Kaludov and baritone Sergei Leiferkus as soloists, but that does not compensate for a heavy-sounding chorus in which words are, again, indistinct, nor for orchestral playing that could do with sharper definition of Rachmaninov's detailed timbres. Dmitri Kitajenko, on a Chandos disc of 1991, directs

the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir in a middle-of-the-road, sometimes sluggish performance that does not really measure up. Vladimir Ashkenazy, a distinguished Rachmaninovian both as interpreter of the piano music and as conductor of the orchestral, has recorded *The Bells* twice, once with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw

Svetlanov takes
his cue directly
from the music
but heightens it
expressively

Orchestra on Decca in 1984, the other with the Czech Philharmonic on Exton in 2002. Both are deeply felt, though Ashkenazy's view of tempi certainly becomes tauter in the later interpretation, the music flowing more easily. There are fine soloists, excellent, well defined choruses, alert orchestras and considerable atmosphere, though there is one strange trait that dogs both performances and isolates them from others – Ashkenazy's decision to speed up in a short passage towards

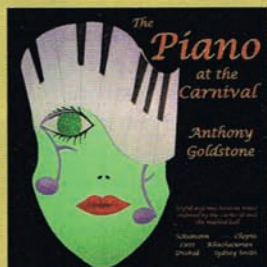
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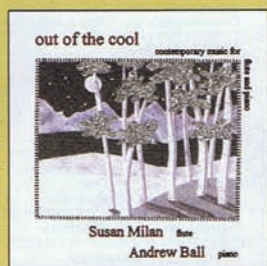


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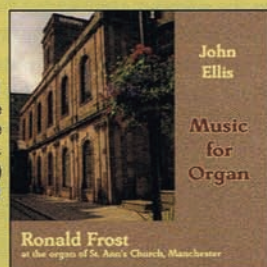


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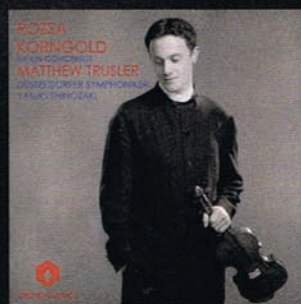


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the end of the first movement, where the direction *Meno mosso, maestoso* still holds good and the sudden (unmarked) quickening of pace tends to obtrude.

Two recordings are exceptional in this category, Alexander Anissimov's 1997 Naxos one with the National Symphony Orchestra and RTÉ Philharmonic Choir, and Semyon Bychkov conducting the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, the WDR Rundfunkchor Köln and Lege Artis Chamber Choir on Profil in 2006. Helen Field, singing for Anissimov, is a real delight in the slow movement, poignant, lyrical and clear in enunciation in a performance that has two fine Russians (tenor Ivan

Choupenitch and baritone Oleg Melnikov) as the other soloists and an approach to the score that transmits a broad, well honed spectrum of emotion. Bychkov rejoices in an overwhelmingly lovely soprano, Tatiana Pavlovskaya, as well as having the benefit of two characterful male soloists (tenor Evgeny Akimov and baritone Vladimir Vaneev) who, with the orchestra and chorus, find the expressive nub

Semyon Bychkov has characterful soloists who find the expressive nub of *The Bells*

THE MODERN CHOICE

WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Semyon Bychkov
Profil M PH07028

Semyon Bychkov's performance blazes and simmers, his natural feel for the music's pulse is palpable, his balance and blend of orchestral timbres acute. He probably has the best of the sopranos in Tatiana Pavlovskaya, but the entire experience is compelling.



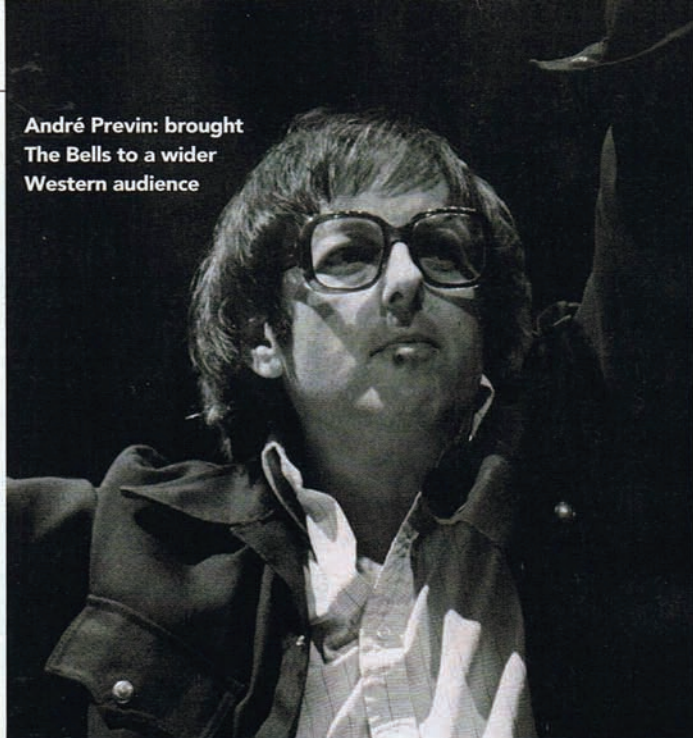
THE FIRST CHOICE

USSR Symphony Orchestra / Evgeny Svetlanov
Regis © RRC1144

This is a thrilling, sensitive, deeply affecting performance, testifying to the strong affinity Svetlanov had for Russian music, and particularly Rachmaninov. With three fine soloists and an orchestra and chorus to match, Svetlanov digs deep into the music's emotional substance.



André Previn: brought
The Bells to a wider
Western audience



of *The Bells*, conveying its apprehension, its surging exultation, its fire, its multifaceted imagery, its introspective brooding and its fusion of tumult and tenderness.

NON-RUSSIAN ARTISTS

André Previn's 1975 recording for EMI with the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, with Sheila Armstrong, Robert Tear and John Shirley-Quirk as soloists, was a landmark in introducing *The Bells* to a wider audience, and its sensitivity, mellifluous shaping and thorough preparation still command attention. There is, however, a certain reserve and caution about it when compared with some of the other versions. The Russian words are well tutored rather than crisp, and there is certainly not the earthy bite that Svetlanov or Bychkov bring to the score. That bite is weakened even further when *The Bells* is sung in English. Fanny S Copeland's re-translation of Balmont's text has long been accepted as the standard one, and is appended to the printed score. It tries to recapture some of the flavour of Poe's original, notably in drawing on Poe's thesaurus of words rhyming with "bells", but in the process it reduces the psychological and sheer verbal thrust of the Balmont. Rachmaninov's music is inextricably bound up with the sounds and inflections of the Russian language, and neither Leonard Slatkin with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and Chorus on Vox (1980) nor Robert Shaw with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus on Telarc (1995) really makes a convincing case for bypassing the Russian. When soprano Marianna Christos renders "and an amber twilight" as "end an ember twilight" for Slatkin, it adds another knot to the linguistic conundrum. But if you have to have *The Bells* in English, Shaw's is the one to go for, since it has more light, more spirit, more intrinsic energy and sharper definition than Slatkin's, and Renée Fleming in the soprano role will appeal to some, even though, while lyrical in the second movement, she has a slight tendency towards over-operatic emphasis.

And so to the verdict. Svetlanov is the first choice. Just as the sound of bells went to Rachmaninov's heart, so Svetlanov has this music in his very soul. His is a performance that might not be graced with the most modern of recording techniques but the impact is nevertheless tremendous, not merely where the music is vociferous, as in the third movement, but also where a certain questioning aura is called for, where rapture and languor might coalesce, where the ever-present intimations of destiny might seem at their most surreptitious. There are performances of greater polish and refinement but nobody catches the music's black earth quality and haunting atmosphere as inspiringly as Svetlanov does. ©

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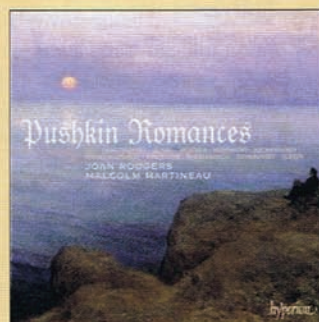


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Few Russian composers could resist setting verses by Alexander Pushkin, and his influence on the development of Russian music was indirectly as great as his influence on literature. This collection demonstrates the compelling power of the poet, and the beauty of the music he inspired. It is performed by Joan Rodgers, an acknowledged master of Russian repertoire, and Malcolm Martineau.

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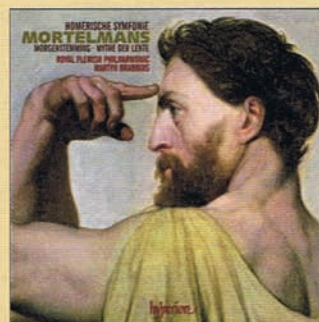


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Flemish music has a rather unusual position in the history of nineteenth-century music, in that orchestral and symphonic music were almost completely subordinated to vocal music. However, occasionally a figure would appear who broke the mould. Lodewijk Mortelmans (1868–1952) was one of those responsible for the Flemish orchestral renaissance, and who looked with curiosity beyond the Belgian borders.

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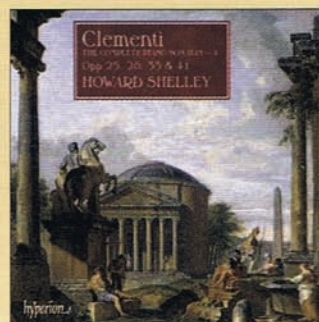


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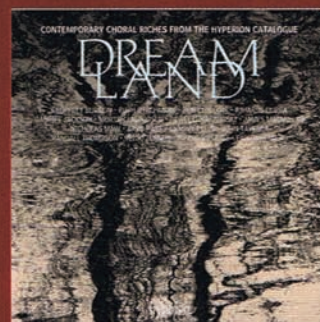


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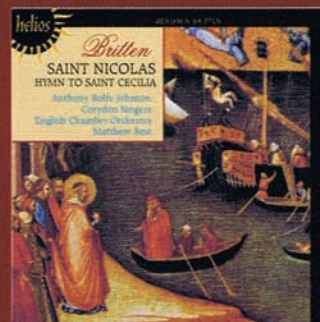


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Orchestral
74 Jiri Barta's captivating cello concertos



Instrumental
94 Tabea Zimmermann plays Bach and Reger solo



Chamber
88 Tal and Groethuysen transform Mendelssohn

Vocal
102 Carmina Chamber Choir's stunning Icelandic discoveries



Opera
114 Renée Fleming's irresistible new verismo album









DVD
120 Masterly Messiaen from Metzmacher

Replay
122 Undiminished greatness: Monteux, Mengelberg and Toscanini

Books
127 John Luther Adams's sound world; the Natural Musician

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2 Compact disc (number of discs in set)
T Text(s) included

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Editor's Choice
See page 12 and this month's cover disc

Orchestral

Rattle's Brahms symphonies • Shostakovich from Gergiev • **Benedetti's Fantasie**

Austin • Ferguson • Finzi • Rawsthorne

Austin Concertino (ed Ellis) Ferguson Piano Concerto Finzi Elogue, Op 10 Rawsthorne Concerto No 1 for Piano, Strings and Percussion Mark Bebbington *pf* City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / Howard Williams Somm © SOMMCD241 (70' • DDD)

An opportunity to hear Rawsthorne's Concerto in its earlier incarnation



The main interest in this collection of piano concertos with string orchestra is the original version of Rawsthorne's Concerto No 1. It was premiered in 1939 but

scored for full orchestra by 1942. John McCabe finds that "its true qualities emerge only in the full orchestral dress" but this convincing performance shows that he might be wrong. All the same it feels odd that the very characteristic oboe melody early in the Chaconne was first represented by *pizzicato* strings. But finally, just as some black-and-white films have qualities denied to full colour, this incarnation of the Rawsthorne is worth hearing in its own right.

The Ferguson has already been recorded by Peter Donohoe as soloist and conductor (Naxos, 5/05). His piano is closer and the result more forthright. Bebbington is more sensitive but the piece works both ways. Ferguson had a curious career, since he stopped composing for the last 40 years of his life and waited for the public to catch up.

Finzi found Ferguson's Concerto "a weak and disappointing work" and felt unable to review it. By contrast, the slow movement of what Finzi planned as part of a concerto in the 1920s, revised 25 years later, has become a classic with at least 10 recordings. The continuous melodic flow is an attraction and Bebbington captures it completely.

Frederic Austin seems to have written his Concertino in 1943 for Ernest Irving, who was director of Ealing Studios at the time. It effectively exploits the popular piano concerto style given wide currency by Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto* and the film composers of that vintage.

Peter Dickinson

Bacewicz

Violin Concertos – No 1; No 3; No 7. Overture Joanna Kurkiewicz *vn* Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Lukasz Borowicz Chandos © CHAN10533 (64' • DDD)

Concertos from a strong personality at contrasting stages of her career



This welcome release marks the centenary of a Polish composer who is no mere "missing link" between Szymanowski and Lutosławski but a distinctive creative

presence in her own right. Grażyna Bacewicz wrote too much too quickly for everything to be on the same level. But this group of concertos for violin – an instrument Bacewicz herself played professionally – reveals a strong personality allied to a special skill in designing un-hackneyed yet workable form-schemes.

No 1 (1937) shows her resourceful and not un-sceptical way with the kind of neoclassicism she encountered when studying in Paris, the orchestra challenging as well as supporting the soloist in ways which are often overtly dramatic. Eleven years and a cataclysmic world war later, Concerto No 3 has a deeper expressiveness, not without its folk-like tinges, and although the drama is still vivid there is a tendency, at least in the slow movement, to fall back on a rather featureless fervour just when strength of focus is most needed. Eighteen years on, and reacting to such new Polish initiatives as Penderecki's "sonorism", Concerto No 7 (1965) is especially memorable for the way in which Bacewicz avoids the pitfall of featurelessness, with a new blend of eloquence and austerity.

It's tantalising to sense here the kind of innovations which the composer might have worked with even more productively had she lived further into her sixties. As it is, the value and originality of what she did achieve is very well conveyed by Joanna Kurkiewicz's polished yet passionate playing, backed to the hilt in slightly over-resonant but texturally lucid recordings, made in Warsaw, by Lukasz Borowicz and the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Arnold Whittall

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 2, Op 19; No 3, Op 37 François-Frédéric Guy *pf* Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra / Philippe Jordan Naïve © V5179 (60' • DDD)

Exuberance and poetry as another Beethoven concerto cycle concludes

With this coupling François-Frédéric Guy completes his set of the Beethoven concertos, once more admirably partnered by the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra under Philippe Jordan.



And what a joy his performances are. Brilliant and direct in the finest French tradition, they are also alive with passing felicities, whether illuminating an early

pioneering spirit or a change into what EM Forster once called "Beethoven's C minor of life". In the Second Concerto Guy's exuberance and poetry go hand in hand. The first movement's startlingly original cadenza is played with unfaltering assurance and the hushed magic with which Guy handles the main theme of the central *Adagio* sounds a special note. A dazzling finale, too, finds ample time for individual nuance and pointed characterisation, making his sense of contrast in the Third Concerto all the more remarkable. Here both he and Jordan take a qualified view of Beethoven's *con brio*, conveying an atmosphere of foreboding, of minor-key unease resolved in an inward-looking *Largo* where everything is experienced afresh. The finale is unusually restrained but, again, there is nothing of the studio and everything of a life experience. So while I would never want to be without Gilels's early, magisterial recording with Cluytens (did this ever find its way onto CD?) or Argerich's recent and unforgettable performance with Abbado (DG, 1/05), Guy's reading ranks high in a crowded catalogue. Bryce Morrison

Beethoven • Berg

Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op 61

Berg Violin Concerto

Arabella Steinbacher *vn* West German Radio Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Andris Nelsons Orfeo © C778 091A (75' • DDD)

Beethoven – selected comparisons:

Mutter, BPO, Karajan (5/85) (DG) 413 818-2GH

Kremer, COE, Harnoncourt (12/93*) (ELAT) 0927 49773-2

Zehetmair, Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen

(4/99) (PHIL) 462 123-2PH

Vengerov, LSO, Rostropovich (11/05) (EMI) 336403-2

A convincing Berg Concerto but the Beethoven is compromised



Just as Berg's Concerto is dedicated to "the memory of an angel", Arabella Steinbacher's recording is dedicated "to my dear Father" who worked at the Bavarian State Opera during the time of Carlos Kleiber and Joseph Keilberth. Father and daughter would regularly play together, their repertoire including the two works coupled here: "Both have something

celestial for me," says Arabella, a claim that is amply borne out by her pure-toned and considered playing. The Berg is intimate, orderly, tonally sweet but never glutinous and always neatly accommodated within the orchestra's overall texture, which is beautifully (and precisely) moulded by Andris Nelsons. Those seeking anger in the more gnarled *tutti* passages will listen in vain. Instead Nelsons aims at a transparent projection of Berg's skilfully wrought harmonies: this is above all a musical reading of the score and provides a moving context for the Bach quotation that dominates the second movement.

The Beethoven Concerto is rather more controversial, especially given livelier options provided by Zehetmair, Kremer and others who eschew a traditionally broad approach in favour of something more assertive, though there are still plenty of recent players who have loved to linger (Vengerov and Mutter being two). Steinbacher and Nelsons certainly linger, very flexibly too, but with the exception of the finale I sense a marked lack of momentum and although Steinbacher bows a most beautiful tone (I was often reminded of Kulenkampff's shellac recording) the impact of the first movement in particular is compromised. Also the crowning glory of Kreisler's cadenza, where the two principal themes cross each other, each taking a turn to lead, lacks the necessary sense of exultation, even though it is technically well played. So, summing up, a highly recommendable Berg coupled with a Beethoven that, although worth a listen, doesn't really compete with the best. Nice, well rounded sound. **Rob Cowan**

Britten • Szymanowski

Britten Violin Concerto, Op 15^a **Szymanowski** Violin Concertos^b – No 1, Op 35; No 2, Op 61
Frank Peter Zimmermann *vn* **Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra** / Manfred Honeck; ^bWarsaw Philharmonic Orchestra / Antoni Wit
Sony Classical © 88697 43999-2 (76' • DDD)

Szymanowski – selected comparisons:
Zehetmair (8/96) (EMI) 555607-2
Danczowska (8/98) (CDAC) ACD026
Britten – selected comparisons:
Mordkovich (9/01) (CHAN) CHAN9910
Vengerov (7/03) (EMI) 557510-2

Flawless technique and ravishing poise combine to superb effect



Frank Peter Zimmermann's new coupling of the Szymanowski concertos enters what is fast becoming a highly competitive field.

Fortunately, even by the side of such distinguished rivals as the Gramophone Award-winning Thomas Zehetmair and Kaja Danczowska, these urgently expressive, cogent and polished performances more than hold their

Manasse on Mundi

Clarinetist Jon Manasse took to Seattle's Benaroya Hall during February this year to record his second album for Harmonia Mundi. With the Seattle Symphony Orchestra under conductor Gerard Schwarz, Manasse performed Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, K622, and Spohr's Second Clarinet Concerto. Manasse's first album for the label featured Brahms's two Clarinet Sonatas performed with long-term duo partner Jon Nakamatsu. That disc was roundly praised by Gramophone's John Warrack for Manasse's "lovely, soft tone, rich in the lower register, singing but never shrill in the upper, and warm even in the weaker centre of the instrument" (3/08).

Trumpet Tine

Norwegian trumpeter Tine Thing Helseth follows her self-titled debut album on Simax with the release of "My Heart Always Wanders" for the label in November. Recorded once again with the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, the SACD this time features the talents of soprano Isa Katharina Gericke and violinist Elise Båtnes. Featured on the disc are works by Holst, Reger, Henry Thomas Smart, Handel, Torelli, Bach, Larsen, Adam and Klotz. The 20-year-old trumpeter's first release included concertos by Haydn, Albinoni, Neruda and Hummel, and was released in November 2007.

LSO and Gergiev

Early 2010 welcomes the next release from the ever-prolific LSO Live. Featuring the London Symphony Orchestra under conductor Valery Gergiev, the disc is dedicated to Prokofiev's complete *Romeo and Juliet*. The work was recorded in concert at the Barbican on November 21 and 23, 2008, as part of Gergiev's Prokofiev cycle, which was also taken on a world tour.

Leon Fleisher gives endless musical insights



Leon Fleisher is captured at the height of his unparalleled pianistic powers

Beethoven • Gluck

Beethoven Piano Concertos – No 2, Op 19^a; No 4, Op 58^b
Gluck *Iphigenie in Aulis* – Overture^b
Leon Fleisher *pf* **Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra** / ^bOtto Klemperer, ^aHans Rosbaud
Medici Masters © MM036-2 (72' • ADD)
Recorded at the Funkhaus, Cologne, on ^bFebruary 27, 1956 and ^aNovember 18, 1957

These recordings, dating from 1956-57, show Leon Fleisher already at the height of his powers, long before the onset of the debilitating illness that curtailed his dazzling career. One of the few truly great American pianists, Fleisher's early discs pre-date his Beethoven concerto performances made during the late Fifties and early Sixties for CBS with George Szell, and show him as unfailing in repose as he is in breathtaking bravura. Not even William Kapell's record of the Second Concerto possessed greater verve and brilliance. How Schnabel, Fleisher's guiding light and mentor, would have loved such relish of Beethoven's early pioneering energy, and a shot-from-guns virtuosity is complemented by a no less remarkable clarity and focus in the central *Adagio*. In the Fourth Concerto Fleisher offers a radically different experience to, say, Myra Hess's legendary warmth and humanity or Radu Lupu's no less celebrated poetry, yet his readings, while bolder and more arresting, give us endless musical insights within a scintillating framework. Time and again he made me recall his exasperated cry to a notably prosaic student heard in a masterclass: "I want more than just the notes, I want a chatter of angels." Criticism falls silent when confronted by such overwhelming mastery and there are no less memorable partnerships from Hans Rosbaud in the Second Concerto and Otto Klemperer in the Fourth. Klemperer's calm and dignity in Gluck's *Iphigenie in Aulis* Overture provides a crowning touch to recordings that transcend any possible sense of dated sound. **Bryce Morrison**

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own. Backed by a notably willing Warsaw Philharmonic under Antoni Wit's watchful lead, Zimmermann plays with flawless technique, ravishing poise and subtle range of colour. These are readings of strong personality, gutsy temperament and full-throated ardour. The captivating First Concerto is as passionate, sensuous and poetic as one could wish, and Wit conducts with even greater freedom and insight than on his admirable Naxos recording with Ilya Kaler (7/07). Zimmermann displays a comparable empathy for the altogether earthier Second Concerto, comprehensively attuned to the ruddy vigour, yearning lyricism and raw emotion of this exhilarating score (inspired, like Szymanowski's marvellous ballet *Harnasie*, by the tangy folk music of the Polish highlands). Biggest climaxes bring a hint of glare; otherwise, the solo balance is most cannily judged.

The Britten is scarcely less impressive, at just under half an hour the swiftest rendering to have come my way since Ida Haendel's outstanding 1977 version with Berglund and the Bournemouth SO (EMI, 5/78th) – and, it must be said, more convincingly held together than existing interpretations from Mordkovich and Vengerov. Once again, Zimmermann is fortunate indeed in receiving such sympathetic support as that provided by Manfred Honeck and the Swedish RSO. I appreciate the purposeful tread of the opening *Moderato* (Britten's qualifying *con moto* marking observed to beneficial effect), as well as the bracing momentum and rhythmic snap these fine artists impart to the fiery *Scherzo*. Zimmermann's involving treatment of the cadenza leads to a deeply eloquent account of the concluding passacaglia, which contains some of Britten's most plangent inspiration. The full-bodied sound here gives little cause for complaint. All told, an absorbing and thoroughly commendable release. **Andrew Achenbach**

Bruckner

Symphonies – No 3 (1889)^a;
No 4, 'Romantic' (1880, ed Nowak)^b
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam /
Mariss Jansons
RCO Live ② RCO09002 (125' • DDD/DSD)
Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam,
in ^aFebruary 2007 & August 2008, ^bSeptember
2008

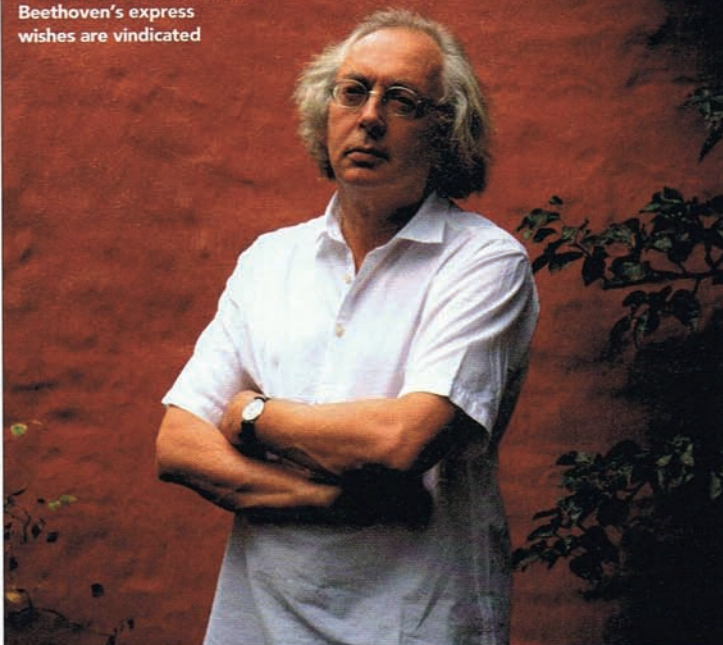
A powerfully articulated pair of symphonies from the Concertgebouw



Listening to these performances, I was reminded of Karajan's remark about the great Czech conductor Václav Talich: "He had a great genius for – how can I put it? – drawing the orchestra together and controlling it as a single expressive instrument." In these powerfully articulated accounts of Bruckner's Third and Fourth symphonies, Mariss Jansons exhibits that very quality. ►

EDITOR'S CHOICE

With Philippe Herreweghe
Beethoven's express
wishes are vindicated



Symphonies that follow the letter and the spirit of Beethoven's directions

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 2, Op 36; No 6, 'Pastoral', Op 68
Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra /
Philippe Herreweghe
Pentatone ② PTC5186 314 (73' • DDD)

For Philippe Herreweghe, Beethoven's metronome markings are sacrosanct even when the composer appears to contradict himself in the first movement of the Sixth Symphony. The written instruction is *Allegro ma non troppo* yet the speed indication is a swift *minim=66*. By easing or tightening phrases and being flexible within a spirited pulse, Herreweghe makes the written instruction fit the speed indication. The music could have sounded harried but it doesn't. This is how he conducts both works; and Beethoven's express wishes are vindicated.

It all begins most arrestingly as the Second Symphony crackles into vibrant life, brass cutting through the fabric, woodwind to the fore. Vibrato-less strings may be a touch etiolated at the upper end but their otherwise un-coagulated tone is revealed in an astutely balanced and transparent SACD recording. Incisive drive in the outer movements nicely complements a lyrically felt slow movement, as does a similarly felt "Scene by the Brook" in the *Pastoral*. Herreweghe doesn't linger here, even for the birdcalls towards the end; yet there is a feeling of gently undulant repose before the "Peasants' Merrymaking" which is ebulliently bucolic as Beethoven envisaged. The storm is stormy rather than cyclonic; and Herreweghe coaxes wind-playing of opaline radiance to launch a "Shepherds' Hymn" that swings in relaxed, songful 6/8 time. Beethoven always knew what he wanted in terms of pacing. Herreweghe and his expert band not only obey his tempi, they do so most artistically as well. Excellent indeed.

Nalen Anthoni

INTERVIEW

Philippe Herreweghe

It is not always possible to achieve Beethoven's metronome markings with modern orchestras – there are many factors to consider such as the size of the orchestra and acoustic of the hall, for example. Thankfully, deSingel in Antwerp has an excellent acoustic and I reduced the strings slightly so we could take it, more or less, at the speed indicated. Let's not forget that these indications are from Beethoven himself, they are historical and interesting – not crazy like some people pretend. This is one of the reasons why the *Pastoral* is still a difficult symphony to play and conduct; the tempo relationships between the movements are also key to any performance but the whole subject of tempo in Beethoven is still a vast discussion.

Like the works of Shakespeare, it is difficult to bring something new to the Beethoven symphonies – they have been performed and interpreted so many times already. But in my view the *Pastoral* Symphony is religious music, especially the last movement. I think my background in singing gives it a slightly different feel with regards to phrasing – I like to illuminate the piece in a way that some performances don't.

We recently played all of the Beethoven symphonies on tour. It is so wonderful to do because you are living and travelling with these works and they create a world that is so strong. I can conduct them over and over but I never tire of them. I would like to record the symphonies again with my orchestra in Paris, the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées. I think perhaps in 10 years I will grow and my perception on period instruments will be different but at the moment it is important for me to take advantage of all I have learnt in the parallel world of period instruments and share my experience with modern orchestras.

Interview by
Hayden Jones

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jiří Barta plays with a warm, unselfconscious expressiveness



Three delightful cello concertos, beautifully performed and recorded



Foerster • Martinů • Novák

Foerster Cello Concerto, Op 143 **Martinů** Cello Concerto No 1, H196 **Novák** Capriccio for Cello and Small Orchestra

Jiří Barta *vc* Prague Philharmonia / Jakub Hrůša
Supraphon © SU3989-2 (67' • DDD)

"Swinging" cello concertos aren't exactly thick on the ground, which makes Jan Novák's Capriccio (1958-59) a particular delight, what with its saucy clarinets and saxophones and its lightly percussive ostinatos. It starts like Twenties show music, goes gently tiptoe for a 12-tone second movement then jives away happily for the closing *Allegro*, with "Lennie" and "Igor" never out of earshot for too long. Midway between the high jinks of Novák's Capriccio and the more formal expressive qualities of Foerster's Concerto comes the thrice-revised First Cello Concerto of Bohuslav Martinů, the successive versions having been premiered by none other than Cassadó, Fournier and Saldó (the version heard here, from 1956). Martinů's characteristically offbeat rhythmic computations make their presence felt right

from the dramatic opening bars but it is the work's haunting melodic profile that most lingers in the memory, especially the first movement's second subject (at 2'10") and the uplifting central *Andante moderato*, one of Martinů's loveliest single movements. The Concerto is rounded off with a typically busy *Allegro*.

Josef Bohuslav Foerster's Concerto of 1931 is the earliest of the works programmed, as well as the most intense and the most obviously rooted in tradition (think of, for example, Dvořák and Suk). The work's heart is again its slow movement, where meaningful dialogue with other solo strings is so effective, the music often rather reminiscent of Chausson. I was amazed to learn that this is the work's world premiere recording.

I've delayed mentioning Jiří Barta simply because there's hardly any need to: he plays with a warm, unselfconscious expressiveness that connects with all three works, and the Prague Philharmonia is with him every step of the way. The sound is excellent, the solo cello profile especially good. **Rob Cowan**

This is particularly evident in the finale of the Fourth Symphony. Though Bruckner spent years trying to get this movement right, it can still sound inadequate in a less than first-rate performance. That is not the case here. Jansons's grasp of the relative importance of individual ideas within the competing hierarchies of thematic material is as impressive as his marrying of a properly measured opening pulse with a strong yet unforced forward motion. I would have preferred a slightly swifter tempo in the symphony's processional slow movement, powerfully presented though the journey is. In the main, though, this is a distinguished account of the excellent 1880 version of the Fourth, the introduction of an egregious cymbal clash at bar 76 of the finale notwithstanding.

Though the Third Symphony is less difficult to bring off, particularly in this tidied-up 1889 version, there have been few better-directed accounts on record than this. If there is a limitation, it lies with the Dutch orchestra's northern manner. Finely as Jansons shapes the polka-cum-chorale in the symphony's finale, Böhm and the Vienna Philharmonic (10/71 - nla) were even finer. Nor do the horn or bassoon sections of what this magazine has dubbed "The World's Greatest Orchestra" have the kind of sound characteristics that have helped establish the superiority of Vienna and Munich Philharmonic accounts of the Fourth Symphony under Böhm, Abbado, Celibidache and Kempe.

The horns are further disadvantaged by a somewhat distant recorded balance, unlike that of the cellos which can be too immediate. "Concertgebouw Live" generally gives us a closer, darker sound than that of Concertgebouw recordings made in an empty hall under studio conditions. A striking pair of discs none the less.

Richard Osborne

Crumb • Prokofiev • Tchernin

Crumb Solo Cello Sonata **Prokofiev** Symphony-Concerto, Op 125 **Tchernin** Solo Cello Suite
Pieter Wispelwey *vc* Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra / Vassily Sinaisky
Channel Classics © CCSSA27909
(60' • DDD/DSD)

*Recorded live

Prokofiev - selected comparison:
Gerhardt, Litton (9/09) (HYPE) CDA67705

Wispelwey comes closest to the mark in Prokofiev's troublesome concerto



Fine recordings of Prokofiev's problematic Symphony-Concerto (misleadingly titled *Sinfonia concertante* by Channel Classics) continue to appear. This latest is in some ways the most enjoyable of all, in that Pieter Wispelwey identifies completely with its

restlessly shifting moods, almost making structural sense of the rambling, 19-minute central movement and delivering the lyrical themes more raptly than I can ever remember. Sinaisky and his Rotterdammers are with him at every step, and the occasional rough edge is easily accepted as part and parcel of the live concert experience. The recording strikes a fine balance between clarity and bloom.

The obvious problem for collectors is the attraction of Alban Gerhardt's recent Hyperion coupling (9/09) of the work with its first incarnation as Cello Concerto [No 1], which is a little less special in terms of performance but extremely instructive as a programme. However, Wispelwey's solo "encores" are more cannily chosen than they might appear, since Tchernepin's Suite and Crumb's Sonata frame the Prokofiev chronologically. In themselves both are relatively anonymous and arguably of more interest to cellists than to the general listener. But delivered as persuasively as they are here, they do contribute to a kind of snapshot of moderated modernism in the cello repertoire in the decade following the Second World War. **David Fanning**

Dvořák

Symphony No 7, B141.

The Golden Spinning-Wheel, B197

Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra /

Yakov Kreizberg

Pentatone Ⓢ PTC5186 082 (66' • DDD)

Symphony No 7 – selected comparison:

Concertgebouw, C Davis (1/89) (PHIL) 420 890-4PSL

The Golden Spinning-Wheel – selected comparison:

RCO, Harmoncourt (9/03) (TEL) 2564 60221-2

BPO, Rattle (9/05) (EMI) 558019-2

A lyrical approach to the Seventh doesn't get to the heart of the matter



Dvořák's Seventh Symphony presents conductors with difficult choices right from the start. How does one interpret the first movement's *Allegro maestoso* marking, for instance? Is the *maestoso* (majestic) directive meant to modify the basic *Allegro* tempo or does it have more to do with character? (Or is it both, perhaps?) And how does one reconcile the score's seemingly incompatible elements – fluid, *legato* lines that are suddenly broken into ragged rhythmic motifs or that are made breathless by phrases that start off the beat?

Yakov Kreizberg's solution is to emphasise the lyrical. His tempo is graceful, the music's jagged edges are softened, and supple phrasing minimises the breathlessness. The result is rather beautiful, thanks to the expressive and refined playing of the Netherlands Philharmonic. There's excitement in the climactic passages, too, though Kreizberg's conciliatory approach ultimately lets the tension sag. Colin Davis, in his authoritative Concertgebouw recording, revels in the music's

contradictions and gets closer to the movement's throbbing heart.

Kreizberg is most persuasive in the *Poco adagio* where he sets and sustains a rapt, tender atmosphere. The *Scherzo* flows elegantly but needs more energy and rhythmic snap. And in the finale, Kreizberg pushes and pulls the tempo around so freely that the structure more or less crumbles.

The Golden Spinning-Wheel is altogether more successful. Kreizberg allows the narrative to unfold naturally and his story-telling is surely paced. Still, both Rattle and Harmoncourt elicit far more characterful playing from their respective orchestras, and the recorded sound of the latter is extremely fine. This Pentatone disc also sounds terrific, particularly in SACD format; musically, though, it's a disappointment.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Elgar

Variations on an Original Theme, 'Enigma', Op 36^a. In the South, 'Alassio', Op 50^b. Serenade, Op 20^c. Philharmonia Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis
Signum Classics Ⓢ SIGCD168 (67' • DDD)
Recorded live at Fairfield Hall, Croydon, on 'April 18 and 'Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, April 19, 2007, 'May 20, 2007

Delius • Elgar • Wagner

Delius A Village Romeo and Juliet, RTI/6 – The Walk to the Paradise Garden Elgar Variations on an Original Theme, 'Enigma', Op 36 Wagner Tannhäuser – Overture; Venusberg Music
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras
ABC Classics Ⓢ ABC476 3224 (65' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Arts Centre, Hamer Hall, Melbourne, on November 24, 2007

A pair of notable live Enigmas – but Davis's In the South takes the prize



If one includes the BBC/Opus Arte DVD of his 2004 drama-documentary with the BBC SO, this is, by my reckoning, Sir Andrew Davis's fifth *Enigma* on disc (and his third with the Philharmonia). Captured on the wing at Croydon's Fairfield Hall during Davis's sesquicentennial Elgar series from the spring of 2007, it is also,

on balance, his most compelling and characterful yet, evincing an eager application, easy flow and unforced wisdom that stem from long familiarity with the score. There are highlights aplenty: both "Troyte" and "GRS" bound along with a trim swagger, while Davis's "Nimrod" comes close to the ideal in its humane, selfless glow. Best of all, perhaps, is "EDU", an infectiously unbuttoned and finely paced culmination, with the organ adding a splendidly grandiloquent opulence to the coda. However, the stand-out

offering here has to be *In the South*, which enshrines as personable, generously pliable and lucidly integrated a conception as I can ever recall. Like Elder on his superb Hallé account (7/03), Davis invests Elgar's arching melodic lines with heartwarming lyrical fervour. What's more, the (uncredited) principal viola extracts every ounce of wistfulness from the sultry "Canto popolare" at the work's evocative heart. Both *In the South* and the *Serenade* (the latter having already appeared as a coupling for James Ehnes's 2008 *Gramophone* Award-winning account of the Violin Concerto – Onyx, 1/08) were recorded in London's Queen Elizabeth Hall – not an ideally spacious acoustic, you'd have thought, but in fact there's little to quibble with sonically.

Of course, Sir Charles Mackerras is also no stranger to *Enigma*, having already set down studio versions in 1986 and 1992 for EMI and Argo at the helm of the LPO and RPO respectively. This live newcomer with the Melbourne SO may not boast the superior coordination and classy sheen of those London-based predecessors but it's an altogether more spontaneous-sounding beast than either. The recording preserves the necessary sense of occasion, though *tutti* don't quite expand as they might. What I really miss most is that last ounce of sparkly temperament and interpretative charisma you encounter by the spade in such classic versions as, say, the 1956 Hallé/Barbirolli (EMI, 6/02 – nla), LSO/Monteux (Decca) or RPO/Del Mar (DG). It's preceded by a lovingly shaped reading of Delius's *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* and a spirited rendering of the *Tannhäuser* Overture and Venusberg Music. In sum, a disc primarily for fans of the MSO and Mackerras alike.

Andrew Achenbach

Haydn

Complete Overtures

Haydn Sinfonietta, Vienna / Manfred Huss

BIS Ⓢ BIS-CD1818 (118' • DDD)

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Whereas I've always resisted collections of familiar Mozart overtures – the final cadences invariably whet my appetite for the whole opera – there's a lot to be said for an anthology of Haydn overtures. This reissue of recordings from 1994-95 showcases some exuberant and inventive music rarely heard in the theatre or concert hall. The exceptions tend to be the overtures that Haydn pilfered for his symphonies, most famously the rollicking "hunting" overture to *La fedeltà premiata*, recycled as the finale to Symphony No 73. Highlights among the other overtures include the three-movement



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Sinfonia to *L'infedeltà delusa*, with its quivering nervous energy and pealing high horns, the turbulent D minor "Storm" overture to the marionette opera *Philemon und Baucis*, and the overture to the harem opera *L'incontro improvviso*, complete with crashing, jangling "Turkish" percussion – this rambunctious music surely deserves to be as well known as Mozart's *Entführung* overture. Equally splendid are the tautly worked overtures to *L'isola disabitata* (opening with a contrapuntally strenuous G minor movement) and Haydn's final opera, *L'anima del filosofo*.

Manfred Huss and his brilliant period band – with gleefully whooping, rasping horns – relish to the full the colour and crackling energy of these overtures, without short-changing the delicate sentiment of their slow sections. Random comparisons – say in the overture to *La vera costanza* – often make Dorati (in his Philips Haydn opera series, currently unavailable) seem distinctly staid: not just a question of Huss's generally zestier tempos, but of sharper articulation and accentuation and a far more pungent and (where apt) raucous sound palette.

Huss's chronological survey also includes the fine overture to Haydn's first oratorio *Il ritorno di Tobia*, the *Introduzione* from *The Seven Last Words*, and movements from *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, the latter played in their original, uncut versions. Performances, again, are vividly coloured and characterised, with the muted period brass intensifying the eeriness of "Chaos". Hearing these discs straight through provoked renewed astonishment at the immense creative distance Haydn travelled over four decades, from the breezy, tootling overture to *Acide* of 1762 to the harmonically visionary, almost impressionistically scored "Chaos" and "Winter" preludes.

Richard Wigmore

Haydn

Symphonies – No 49, 'La Passione'; No 80.

Violin Concerto, HobVIIa/1*

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra /

Gottfried von der Goltz **vn*

Harmonia Mundi © HMX296 2029 (69' • DDD)

Haydn

Symphonies –

Nos 41; No 44, 'Trauer'; No 49, 'La Passione'

Arion Baroque Orchestra / Gary Cooper *bpd*

early-music.com © EMCCD7769 (70' • DDD)

Violin Concerto – selected comparisons:

Standage, *English Concert*, Pincock (5/89) (ARCH) 427 316-2AH

E Wallfisch, OAE (11/92*) (VIRG) 561800-2

Plenty of Passione all round and a healthy dose of Sturm und Drang

The Freiburg Baroque Orchestra headline with the C major Violin Concerto but their disc is all the more exciting for offering the first recording



play the crucial second repeat in that finale, a musical joke that Mozart might have had in mind at the close of his late E flat Symphony, K543 (they omit the slow movement's second repeat though: a pity).

In *La Passione* the FBO come up against direct competition from a recent recording from Canadian ensemble Arion and British harpsichordist Gary Cooper. The readings are broadly similar: the Freiburg strings are by and large more secure and characterful, while Arion's tempi are brisker, responding well to the fury of the fast movements. The only caveat that may concern some listeners is the use of harpsichord continuo in both recordings (although it's mercifully absent from the FBO's No 80):

'Cooper wins the day, not least in the slow movement with Claire Guimond's rapt flute arabesques'

Cooper's instrument especially makes the finale a most clattery affair. The only non-harpsichord-accompanied period recordings – under Hogwood (*L'Oiseau-Lyre*, 11/94) and Brüggén (Philips, 6/99) – are out of the catalogue. The immediate choice here, though, is between the driven Canadians and the more thoughtful, colourful Germans.

Gottfried von der Goltz's reading of the C major Violin Concerto joins Elizabeth Wallfisch and Simon Standage in the period-instrument stakes. Less immediately concerned than those two with uniform sweetness of tone, he offers a more than viable alternative, extracting maximum characterisation and contrast from this early work, rendering it a pleasing interlude between the two more fiercely individualistic symphonies.

Cooper gives us a decent reading of the *Trauer* Symphony along with the heinously neglected No 41, which he claims to be the first recording in its "original" version (ie no trumpets and drums) – not true, as the unavailable Hogwood recording (4/92) also goes for this "unadorned" option. Cooper wins the day though, not least in the slow movement with Claire Guimond's rapt flute

arabesques, and in the opening movement and the Trio with their horns whooping joyously in the top register.

David Threshier

Lalo

Violin Concerto, Op 20. *Symphonie espagnole*, Op 21. *Fantaisie norvégienne*

Jean-Jacques Kantorow *vn* Granada City Orchestra / Kees Bakels

BIS © BIS-CD1680 (70' • DDD)

Plenty of Spanish colour in these three Sarasate-inspired works



In 1873, the year before writing *Symphonie espagnole*, Lalo composed another work for the great Spanish violinist Sarasate – his Concerto in F, fated to remain neglected in the

shadow of its popular companion-piece. Given pride of place on this CD, however, we can hear that it's well worth reviving; the first movement, with its fascinating tonal scheme based on dramatic alternations of minor and major, is particularly impressive. Jean-Jacques Kantorow, one of today's most individual players, has the measure of Lalo's Sarasate-inspired violin-writing – he's able to toss off the virtuoso passagework in a seemingly effortless manner and his distinctive tone lends a sensuous allure to Lalo's melodies. The Granada orchestra gives spirited support; one can imagine more perfectly blended sonorities but with Lalo it's probably more important that the sharply contrasted orchestral colours are brought out strongly, as they are here.

The *Fantaisie norvégienne* is a shorter, slighter work but full of charm and with many individual touches, especially in the scintillating final movement. Kantorow's interpretation of the *Symphonie espagnole* shows him continually alive to expressive changes. Occasionally his *rubato* may seem excessive but it's all clearly part of a deeply felt view of the music, spontaneous and immediate. The local Spanish colour is vividly applied, especially in the second and third movements. In the *Andante*, the quiet moments might have sounded more soft and tender, the melody in the finale's middle section a touch more sentimental, but all in all these are exciting, strongly coloured performances that do Lalo proud. Duncan Druce

Mahler

'4 Movements'

Blumine. Totenfeier. What the Wild Flowers Tell Me

(arr Britten). Symphony No 10 – Adagio

Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Paavo Järvi

Virgin Classics © 216576-2 (61' • DDD)

Mahler's first thoughts gathered together in a considered collection

Readers may recall the fuss when DG proposed releasing bleeding chunks from Claudio Abbado's

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Mahler cycle. This however is an altogether worthier undertaking which may well appeal to collectors looking to explore the composer's workshop and plug a few gaps.

Less happily the "4 Movements" are not presented in chronological order. *Totenfeier* comes first, a dry run for the opening funeral rites of the Symphony No 2; Riccardo Chailly (Decca, 6/02) was the first to include the score as a supplement to that definitive work. Michael Kennedy's booklet-note for the present disc is not altogether supportive of the notion that the *Adagio*, re-contextualised by the now ubiquitous Deryck Cooke performing version of the Tenth, is best heard separately. Several conductors, including Sir Simon Rattle (EMI, 12/92), present *Blumine* as an appendix to the Symphony No 1 of which it was originally part, hence allowing one to programme it back in. Paavo Järvi concludes with his most neglected historical curio. *What the Wild Flowers Tell Me* is Britten's (now seemingly redundant) scaled-down extract from the Third Symphony, prepared in 1941 at a time when Mahler was rarely performed.

Virgin Classics has been here before with Karl Anton Rickenbacher's Bamberg selection, latterly paired with music by Hindemith (11/89^R), only you won't find the Britten arrangement there. Järvi secures typically elegant and refined playing throughout and the sound is excellent. Notwithstanding commitments elsewhere he is currently music director of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony and the relationship would seem to be working well. He obviously believes that the "4 Movements" are worth hearing in this form – this is not a rehearse-record project but one he has toured with – and you might just agree with him. **David Gutman**

Martucci

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 66^a. *Colore orientale*, Op 44 No 3. *Serenata*, Op 57 No 1. *Minuetto*, Op 57 No 2. *Momento musicale*, Op 57 No 3. *Novelletta*, Op 82 No 2

^aGesualdo Coggi *pf* Rome Symphony Orchestra / Francesco La Vecchia
Naxos © 8 570932 (69' • DDD)

Concerto No 2 – selected comparisons:

Toscanini, *Horszowski*, NBC SO (9/86) (DELL) DA9017
Caramiello, *D'Avalos*, *Philb* (7/90) (ASV) CDDCA691

Martucci's music may be better heard in the hands of older masters



How to characterise Martucci's music? On this disc he seems to be two people: the short works, all arranged for orchestra from piano originals, put me in mind of the kind of English light music that Edward German or

Arthur Sullivan produced (though Martucci did not have their melodic gifts); the Concerto, on the other hand, is very much in the heavyweight German tradition with glimpses of Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Anton Rubinstein. The over-written and unwieldy first movement (over 21 minutes here) with its unpredictable twists and turns yields to a more languid *Larghetto* followed by a rumbustious finale, *scherzo*-like in spirit.

The concerto needs a firm hand at the tiller and a resourceful pianist to negotiate the cruelly demanding solo part. Sadly it gets only the latter here and, due to the recording balance, the piano so dominates proceedings that orchestral detail goes by the board. Francesco Caramiello with Francesco D'Avalos adopt roughly the same tempi throughout and the Philharmonia Orchestra is in a different league to the adequate Rome orchestra. Neither of these, however, can compare with Toscanini's live Carnegie Hall performance (1953) with Mieczysław Horszowski and the NBC Symphony. The recorded sound is remarkable in the circumstances and the colourful scoring makes the effects for which it was intended. One small symptomatic example is the horn triplets at 2'20" (first movement), inaudible under La Vecchia and D'Avalos, making their presence felt under Toscanini who plays all three movements significantly faster – and, as he conducted the composer in the work in 1899, likely to be authentic.

Jeremy Nicholas

Musgrave

Turbulent Landscapes^a. Songs for a Winter's Evening^b. Two's Company^c

^bLisa Milne *sop* Nicholas Daniel *ob* Evelyn Glennie *perc* ^cBBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra /

^aOsmo Vänskä; ^cBBC Symphony Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek

NMC © NMCD153 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live

Musgrave makes memorable music with Turner's turbulent landscapes



Thea Musgrave (*b*1928) belongs to a generation of Scottish composers – Iain Hamilton, Thomas Wilson and Ronald Stevenson are others – who were confronted with the radical innovations of the immediate post-war years even before they'd had time to absorb the earlier radicalisms of the Schoenberg school. After studies in Edinburgh and Paris which encouraged rejection of radicalism for its own sake, Musgrave has spent most of her time in America, and it is with a degree of affectionate distancing that she alludes to things Scottish and British in two of these compositions from the last 15 years.

Songs for a Winter's Evening sets seven Burns lyrics, including such familiar items as "Ca' the



Beethoven Brahms / Chopin

IVAN MORAVEC – piano



Korngold / Strauss

PAVEL ŠPORCL – violin
Prague Symphony Orchestra
JIŘÍ KOUT



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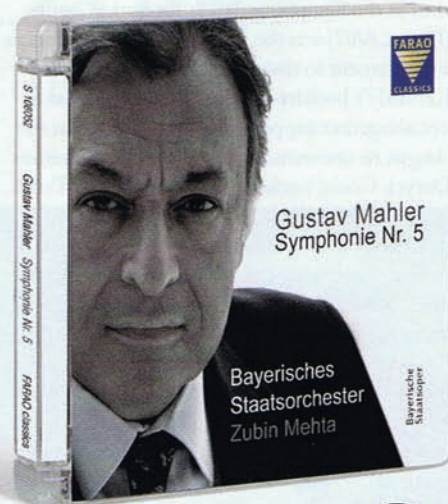


Gustav Mahler Symphony No. 5

Bavarian State Orchestra
Zubin Mehta



Zubin Mehta was Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera from 1998 until 2006. He regularly returns to the conductor's podium of the Bavarian State Orchestra. This new release on SACD hybrid was recorded live in December 2008. It illustrates the outstanding class and unique tonal tradition of his orchestra. A truly great musical performance!

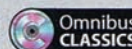
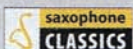


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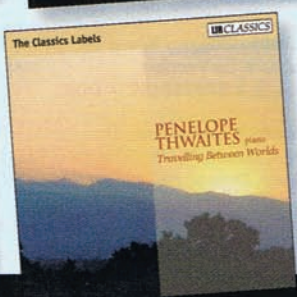
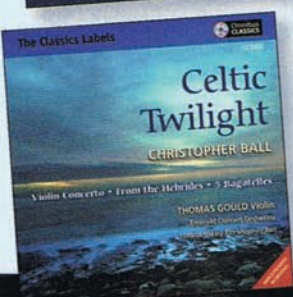
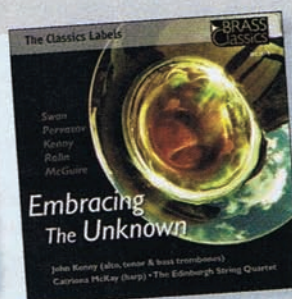
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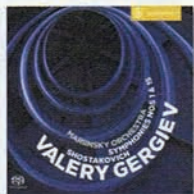
yowes" and "Ye banks and braes", in ways which acknowledge their folk associations while opening them out to a more opulent, romanticised idiom. The result has a very positive, personal perspective, yet the blend isn't entirely convincing despite an excellent performance. By contrast, Musgrave's no less individual response to a group of Turner's paintings in *Turbulent Landscapes* is a triumph: cogently structured yet uninhibitedly pictorial encapsulations of these canvases which manage to be economical, witty and distinctively expressive all at the same time.

Two's Company adds to Musgrave's sequence of concertos in which the obvious contrast between soloist(s) and orchestra is enhanced by allowing the soloists to move around the performance space, challenging and responding to different groups of supporting (or opposing) instruments. Here the unusual pairing of oboe and percussion suggests a progression from initial disparity to eventual unanimity. The later stages of this are engaging, the earlier music more diffuse, less focused. All three live performances come across well in recordings that bring out Musgrave's myriad instrumental felicities: but *Turbulent Landscapes* is the stand-out success. **Arnold Whittall**

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 1, Op 10; No 15, Op 141
Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev
Mariinsky © MAR0502 (76' • DDD/DSD)
Recorded live at the Mariinsky Concert Hall,
St Petersburg, in July 2008

Gergiev's Shostakovich doesn't blaze as brightly as his Soviet forebears



Gergiev's Shostakovich is rarely the kind of hyper-intense experience communicated by his great Russian forebears – Mravinsky, Kondrashin, Svetlanov and the like – but more usually something closer to the refinement and self-possession of a Haitink. And so it proves here. Articulation is less pointed than in the Soviet Russian tradition, with many phrases more roundly contoured, timbres more blended, balance more judicious and general characterisation more poised.

In each movement Gergiev demonstrates a sure sense of structural proportion and places the climaxes superbly, reaping the rewards of strength in reserve. On the downside, there is little eloquence from moment to moment. The First Symphony communicates less sense of fun than usual and the Fifteenth less mystery and existential angst (as well as starting rather sluggishly). At times there are totally blank pages, interpretatively speaking, where it seems as though no guiding spirit whatsoever is at work.

The Mariinsky orchestral sound is more international these days than of old. But that does not preclude some raw intonation – in the brass at the outset of the First Symphony, later on from

the solo violin, later still between the piano and the rest of the orchestra, and even in the finale's crucial timpani theme – while the woodwind are off-colour in the slow movement. The Fifteenth, too, has its rough edges, and in general the playing is well below the standard one would expect from even a mid-ranking Western orchestra. Some of this might be excusable in the context of live performances; even so, this is not a remotely recommendable issue. **David Fanning**

Shostakovich

Symphony No 15, Op 141. Hamlet, Op 32 – selection
Russian National Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev
Pentatone © PTC5186 331 (65' • DDD)

An over-literal approach to the Fifteenth that leaves you asking 'why?'



In his Fifteenth Symphony, Shostakovich confronts us with a list of irreconcilable, curiousest-and-curiousest "whys". Why start your symphony with a jingle more suited to advertising soap powder; why end with an eco-system of nervy, tick-tocking percussion instruments, as though melody and harmony have drained away; why those infamous references to Rossini's *William Tell* Overture; why Wagner in the second movement; why a dark descent towards disembodied woodblock taps and fragmenting pitched-percussion lines? Why is the only thing that feels "real" in this symphony the artificiality of borrowed material?

The problem with Mikhail Pletnev's approach is that he fields the notes with such a ruthlessly clean bat he manages to miss the music. The opening flute solo sounds trivial rather than knowingly trivial, and the accompanying string "oom-pahs" lack slapstick or thrust. Pletnev tucks the first Rossini quote in neatly, as though it would be uncharitable to ask why Shostakovich has put it there. The opening brass chords in the *Adagio* are tepid, the fatalistic timpani strikes almost comically limp. The *Scherzo* is cautiously sluggish and the climax section in the finale is hammed up shamelessly, but this only emphasises how directionless progress towards this stirring point of arrival has been. The recorded sound has impressive depth, but every singalong grunt from the podium is luridly audible.

The coupling is music Shostakovich wrote for a 1931 production of *Hamlet* (not to be confused with his later film score) and it's an entertaining enough collection of trademark pastiches – not so entertaining, however, that the sins of Pletnev's poor Fifteenth are absolved. **Philip Clark**

R Strauss

Aus Italien, Op 16. *Don Juan*, Op 20.
Don Quixote, Op 35
Staatskapelle Dresden / Fabio Luisi
Sony Classical © 88697 43554-2
(103' • DDD/DSD)

Aus Italien – selected comparisons:

Staatskapelle Dresden, Kempe (12/92) (EMI) 764342-2
Zürich Tonhalle, Zinman (3/01) (ARTN) 74321 77067-2

Don Quixote – selected comparisons:

Tortelier, Staatskapelle Dresden, Kempe (12/92) (EMI) 764350-2

Janigro, Chicago SO, Reiner (9/94) (RCA) 09026 61796-2

Fournier, BPO, Karajan (2/99) (DG) 457 725-2GOR

An Italian conductor takes on Italian Strauss but falters as he turns to Spain



Though the Staatskapelle Dresden is arguably the world's pre-eminent Richard Strauss ensemble, it has only once recorded *Aus Italien*. That was under Rudolf Kempe in 1974.

Now we have a second recording from Fabio Luisi, the orchestra's recently installed music director who is himself "aus Italien". An account of *Don Juan* that is Toscanini-like in its electricity and lean athleticism confirms that Italianate pedigree.

The new *Aus Italien* is not dissimilar to Kempe's. The fine opening movement – "a vision of the Roman countryside, bathed in sunshine, seen from the Villa d'Este in Tivoli" – is, if anything, even more lucidly unfolded. It is the finale that unseated the work in highbrow estimation, Strauss mistaking Denza's "Funiculi, Funiculà" for an actual Neapolitan folksong. Kempe undercuts the song's vulgarity by bathing the strings' initial statement in a warm southern glow. Luisi is less guarded with a touch more *rodomontade* from the percussion department.

As a single CD, this shrewd pairing of *Don Juan* and *Aus Italien* would have been more than a match for Zinman's Zürich *Aus Italien*, the only wholly recommendable single-disc version currently available. Unfortunately, it is tied to a poorly filled second disc given over to a compromised account of that greatest of all Strauss tone-poems, *Don Quixote*.

The performance dates from 2004 and suffers as do most versions which deploy an orchestral cellist in the title-role. Former Dresden cellist Jan Vogler plays with the kind of distinction you might look for in an exposition of unaccompanied Bach. But there is little here of the high eloquence of Fournier's playing under Karajan or Tortelier's psychological acuity for Kempe.

Luisi's own direction is distinguished, not dissimilar to Kempe's in its general approach. But here again the devil is in the detail, with Kempe, Karajan and the not-to-be-forgotten Fritz Reiner often making more of Strauss's astonishing orchestral realisations of Quixote's adventures. Luisi is close to Karajan in his glowing account of Quixote's dream of knight errantry though neither he nor Kempe chooses to invoke the tragic muse as Karajan does in Quixote's final humiliation at the hands of the Knight of the White Moon.

Richard Osborne

EDITOR'S CHOICE

La Serenissima bring bright attractiveness and vivacity to their performances



Vivaldi's French side explored with great skill and taste by La Serenissima



Vivaldi

'The French Connection'

Concertos for Strings – RV114; RV119; RV157. Flute Concertos^a – RV432; RV438a. Bassoon Concertos^b – RV468 (fragment); RV488. Violin Concerto, RV211^c. Chamber Concerto, RV100

^aKaty Bircher fl ^bPeter Whelen bn
La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler ^cvn
Avie © AV2178 (77' • DDD)

Intriguing title? Well some, at least, of Vivaldi's own French connections are known: the French ambassador to Venice was among his patrons, and he supplied 12 concertos without soloist to an unknown Parisian collector. Adrian Chandler has taken three of these last as a starting-point for a full disc of flute, bassoon and violin concertos in which, he reckons, references to the French style are apparent. But is a dotted rhythm here, a chaconne there and a sprinkling of Rameau-ish moments enough to make Vivaldi sound French? Wisely, Chandler does not claim so, though his concession that "Vivaldi's style is rarely unrecognisable" puts it mildly; Vivaldi seldom sounds like anyone else, even in the grand overture-like first movement of the Violin Concerto RV211, by some margin the most French-drenched piece on this disc. The chaconnes and melodic *frou-frous* found elsewhere may suggest Frenchness to one as

sensitive to the composer's style as Chandler, but to the average listener they will surely sound like Vivaldi from head to toe.

But if this disc works hard to justify its title, what care we when the results make such enjoyable listening? And who can blame Chandler for looking for a way to programme and market Vivaldi that avoids filling it with

'If this disc works hard to justify its title, what care we when the results make such enjoyable listening?'

10 works all of the same type? Here the three solo instruments come and go in various combinations, always pleasing us and never outstaying their welcome. They are played with skill and taste, lapsing only when the bassoon overpowers the flute in the slow movement of RV438. The orchestral sound, as always with La Serenissima, achieves bright attractiveness and vivacity without feeling the need to pursue the taut energy of some other groups. And that's just fine.

Lindsay Kemp

Nicola Benedetti

'Fantasie'

Fauré Apres une rêve, Op 7 No 1^a Massenet Thaïs – Méditation^b Pärt Spiegel im Spiegel^a Rachmaninov Vocalise, Op 34 No 14^a Ravel Tzigane^c Saint-Saëns Introduction and Rondo capriccioso, Op 28 Sarasate Zigeunerweisen, Op 20^d Vaughan Williams The Lark Ascending^c

Nicola Benedetti ^{vn} Alexei Grynyuk ^{pf} London Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton; ^{London} Symphony Orchestra / Daniel Harding; ^{Royal} Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

DG © 476 3399GH (69' • DDD)

Benedetti is back with a CD that will appeal to her many fans



This collection of popular favourites signals Nicola Benedetti's return to recording after a break of nearly two years. Two items, however – the

Vaughan Williams and Massenet – are reissues. *The Lark Ascending* is beautifully played, with pure, unforced tone, and in the unmeasured passages Benedetti imaginatively suggests the bird's unfettered, unpredictable flight. By contrast, she produces an alluring, vibrant tone for the *Méditation* from *Thaïs*, and a similarly passionate approach

'The Rachmaninov shows how sensitively she can vary her tone to match the rise and fall of melodic intensity'

animates several of the newly recorded tracks – the Rachmaninov and Fauré, particularly. Yet Benedetti doesn't just rely on a glamorous, emotive sound; the Rachmaninov, for instance, shows how sensitively she can vary her tone to match the rise and fall of melodic intensity.

I have to confess I find little to enjoy in Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel*. Benedetti's talent for varied expression has no outlet here – all one can say is that her long notes sound lovely. However, the two gypsy-style pieces – Sarasate and Ravel – reveal a powerful sense of enjoyment in getting the idiom just right; in making quick alternations between emotional declamation and delicate ornamentation, and achieving rhythmic elation in the fast music. The bold colours of Ravel's orchestration, splendidly realised on this recording, add much to *Tzigane's* brilliant effect. The Saint-Saëns is finely played, though tending occasionally to sound rather too serious; the very best accounts – Szeryng's 1970 Philips recording, for instance – are able to balance the capricious alternation of playful and tender motifs more perfectly.

"Fantasie" is clearly aimed at a wide circulation – and it certainly deserves it.

Duncan Druce



Simon Rattle's
Brahms is par
for the course



Simon Rattle plunges into the Brahms symphonies with the Berlin Philharmonic

Brahms

Complete Symphonies
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle
EMI Ⓢ 267254-2 (151' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin

Brahms

Symphony No 4, Op 98. Variations on a Theme by Haydn, 'St Antoni Chorale', Op 56a. Hungarian Dances, WoO 1 – No 5 (orch Schmeling)
Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach
Hänssler Classic Ⓢ CD98 593 (64' • DDD)
Recorded live in Suntory Hall, Tokyo

Symphonies – selected comparisons:

BPO, Karajan (10/78*) (DG) 477 7579GB3
Hallé, Loughran (10/82*) (EMI) 575753-2
BPO, Karajan (4/88*) (DG) 474 263-2GX2
Phil, Klemperer (1/90*) (EMI) 562742-2
BPO, VPO, Furtwängler (2/96) (EMI) 565513-2
Staatskapelle, Sanderling (1/97) (RCA) 74321 30367-2
BPO, Harnoncourt (11/97) (TEL) 0630 13136-2

Consistently satisfying cycles of the four Brahms symphonies are rare on record. A skilled Kapellmeister might establish a line through all four works; Boult managed this, as did James Loughran in his finely articulated mid-1970s Hallé cycle which remains to this day an outstanding bargain. Not the least of the problems is the dichotomy that exists between the First and Third symphonies – both deeply personal works – and their musical antitypes, the organically conceived

and wondrously self-sufficient Second and Fourth symphonies. It requires a particular kind of mind and technique to cope with these immensities. Furtwängler had the wherewithal, as did Sanderling, a conductor much admired by Rattle, in his 1971-72 Dresden cycle. There is also Klemperer whose 1956-57 Philharmonia cycle remains an object lesson in Brahmsian discourse, lofty and alive from first note to last.

Forging a comparable discourse with the Berlin Philharmonic is no easy task, as Simon Rattle is no doubt shrewdly aware. Furtwängler had his own methods, drawing without fear or favour on the orchestra's richly layered sound and visceral manner. A First and Third man, he highlighted the darker elements of the Second and treated the Fourth as unmitigated tragedy. Karajan, a Second and Fourth man who spent 50 years grappling with the First like a climber confronting some unattainable Alpine peak, first clarified the Berlin sound, then rebuilt it to epic proportions, as we can hear in his 1987 DG recording of the First or the tumultuous performance of that same symphony he conducted in London in October 1988 (Testament, 1/09).

During the Abbado years, it was Harnoncourt who effected the most significant change of direction with his live 1996-97 cycle. He lightened the sound, clipped the phrase lengths and revealed the pre-Classical elements in Brahms's thinking and orchestration.

Not everything works but at its current superbudget price it is a set any interested Brahmsian

should hear. After Rattle's radically styled Vienna Philharmonic Beethoven cycle, you might imagine that his Brahms would be closer to Harnoncourt's than Karajan's. This is not the case. Taking on the mantle of conductor as custodian, he has gone back to the pre-1989 way of doing things. Where Harnoncourt rather underplays the First Symphony, giving it a decorous Schumannesque feel, Rattle's reading is one in which the inwardness and charm of the exquisitely realised inner movements offset the breadth and lyric power of the surrounding drama. Less riven than Furtwängler's reading or the later Karajan's, it is a powerfully directed performance, measured and humane.

The EMI recording is an "in concert" affair, more closely focused, with a less natural-sounding ambience than the recording Teldec gave Harnoncourt in this same hall. Impressive in the First Symphony, it seems cloudier and more claustrophobic in the Second. Clearly the reading has something to do with this, with its bottom-heavy string sound and evened-out dynamics. I find a lack of narrative variation here; too little play of light and shade as we journey through the symphony's changing landscapes.

We return to memorability in the Third where we hear again the kind of exquisitely quiet string- and horn-playing – the inner movements rich in beauty and quiet foreboding – which we missed in the Second. Rattle's pacing of the first movement is almost as broad as Sanderling's, with the exposition repeat which Sanderling omits adding to the range. Here Rattle's finely moulded direction sustains the discourse. Tension occasionally slackens in meditative passages but this is preferable to the unnuanced approach we have in the Second Symphony.

Sadly the performance of the Fourth is again bottom-heavy, with slowish tempi that rob the music of its edge and tragic severity. As Michael Oliver observed when reviewing EMI's Furtwängler set, "If one of a conductor's functions is to reveal the composer's intentions, another is to convince you that those intentions matter". It is this latter dimension that Rattle's Fourth currently lacks. Still, two successes out of four is not bad. In the great Brahms handicap that's about par for the course.

As for Eschenbach's live Tokyo Fourth, when an old friend commended the Sanderling cycle to Sir Adrian Boult, he said, "Let me hear the *Tragic Overture* and the finale of the Fourth". I recalled that request as I listened to the young players of the 2005 Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra vainly attempting to come to terms with the Fourth's all-consuming finale. This is the kind of performance whose inadequacies become more apparent at each new hearing, the very last thing you want from a gramophone record. **Richard Osborne**

Chamber

Angela East's Baroque cello • Ebène Quartet's Brahms • Mendelssohn piano duets

Brahms

Piano Quintet, Op 34.
String Quartet No 1, Op 51 No 1

^aAkiko Yamamoto *pf*

Ebène Quartet (Pierre Colombet, Gabriel Le Magadure *vns* Mathieu Herzog *va* Raphaël Merlin *vc*)
Virgin Classics © 216622-2 (79' • DDD)

Pf Qnt – selected comparisons:

Andres, Artemis Qt (A/O7) (VIRG) 395143-2

Hough, Takács Qt (1/08) (HYPE) CDA67551

Stg Qt No 1 – selected comparison:

Takács Qt (12/08) (HYPE) CDA67552

Can Brahms help the Ebènes repeat their Gramophone Awards success?



The Ebène Quartet deservedly won the chamber category in this year's Gramophone Awards with their disc of Debussy, Fauré and Ravel (which was also voted Recording of the Year – see page 62). They follow up that success with Brahms, immediately coming into competition with another Award-winner from label-mates Leif Ove Andsnes and the Artemis Quartet. While one felt they were completely “inside” the French repertoire, immersed in the Gallic perfume of those three rarefied but contrasting works, their engagement with Brahms does not on first acquaintance seem so penetrating. Whereas Andsnes and the Artemis launch themselves into the heart of Brahms's impetuous youthful turmoil, the Ebène and pianist Akiko Yamamoto seem to inhabit it from the outside. Stephen Hough and the Takács Quartet's recent recording of the work is also a fully integrated, lively reading. Either of these two comparisons would stand as an ideal benchmark for the Piano Quintet.

The Takács Quartet also offer a rival recording of the C minor String Quartet (their Hyperion remake, which follows almost two decades after their first recording for Decca, 9/90⁸). While both the Ebène and the Takács match each other for unanimity and strength of ensemble, it is consistently the Takács who pip their younger French counterparts in terms of forward thrust and far-sighted structural awareness, demonstrating a more secure sense of the work's inexorable momentum. One feels that the French ensemble's less febrile approach may find its true home in the playful neoclassicism of Brahms's Third Quartet.

With regret, though, this is not a Brahms chamber music disc of choice. But when the Ebène offer their own remake of this music

20 years hence, they will surely then demonstrate why this music from Brahms's first flush of success so richly repays exploration with the benefit of a wisdom and experience that are born of greater maturity. **David Threasher**

Gismonti

Sertões Veredas^a. Palhaço^b. Lundú^b. Mestiço and Caboclo^b. Dois Violões^b. Dança dos escravos^b. Chora Antônio^b. Zig Zag^b. Carmen^b. Águas and Dança^b. Saudações^b

^bEgberto Gismonti, ^bAlexandre Gismonti *gtrs*

^aCamerata Romeu / Zenaida Romeu

ECM New Series © 2 179 7280 (116' • DDD)

Diverse musical influences make this an intriguing, beautifully presented disc



Whether as composer or performer, Egberto Gismonti is nothing if not versatile in fusing Brazilian idioms with European procedures. *Saudações* is among his most ambitious projects: a seven-movement suite encompassing the broad spectrum of cultural references. Those unfamiliar with Gismonti's work should consider him as a latter-day Villa-Lobos – the “exotic” elements of the latter's *Chôros* allied to the contrapuntal density of his *Bachianas brasileiras*. And as someone who has absorbed the music of native Amazon peoples as thoroughly as he studied counterpoint with Nadia Boulanger and serial technique with Jean Barraqué, Gismonti is well able to bring such diversity into productive accord – the only proviso being that the prolix nature of the material can seem self-defeating even on repeated hearings. That the instrumentation is solely for string orchestra may partly account for this: not that Camerata Romeu are other than authoritative but the uniformity of timbre does rather diffuse the music's impact given its extended time-frame.

The point is underlined more keenly on the second disc: a collection of guitar duets with Gismonti partnered by his son Alexandre. As someone who came relatively late to the instrument, Gismonti has refused to abide by its limitations – devising a 10-string instrument that offers the textural and tonal intricacy of the piano. One would be hard-put to identify just two guitarists on these tracks, ranging from the melodic verve of *Lundú* and *Carmen* through to the breathtaking variation-sequence of *Mestiço* and *Caboclo* and the harmonic ingenuity of *Zig Zag*. Both discs are superbly presented as befits a long association with ECM – with sound and annotations that leave nothing to be desired.

Gismonti has enjoyed only limited exposure here, but an evening spent in the company of father and son would surely not be unfeasible. How about it, Ronnie Scott's? **Richard Whitehouse**

Handel

12 Solo Sonatas, Op 1

Academy of Ancient Music (Rachel Brown *fl/rec* Frank de Bruine *ob* Pavlo Beznosiuk *vm*) / **Richard Egarr** *hpd*

Harmonia Mundi © 2 HMU90 7465/6 (148' • DDD)

Selected comparison:

L. Beznosiuk, Beckett, Goodwin, E Wallfisch, Tunnicliffe, Nicholson (3/96) (HYPE) CDA66921/3

Handel's mangled mish-mash of sonatas are given sparkling, charming readings



John Walsh senior's compilation of Handel's sonatas for solo instrument and basso continuo (first printed c1730 and retrospectively known as Opus 1) is a horrible mess

from a scholarly perspective. Walsh cobbled together the collection, often printing sonatas for the wrong instrument, in the wrong key, or with some wrong movements; some sonatas are clearly not even composed by Handel. In his booklet essay, Richard Egarr does an entertaining job of conveying the confusing history and contents of “Op 1”, although his enthusiasm leads him to confuse or neglect numerous small but significant details.

Happily, there can be few qualms about the assured music-making. *Rubato* in slow movements sometimes disturbs the rhythmic pulse of Handel's writing, but otherwise the playing of the three principals of the Academy of Ancient Music sparkles, charms and soothes. Rachel Brown's recorder-playing is sweetly elegiac in leisurely music, and subtle yet playful in quicker movements (the conclusion of HWV369); likewise, Brown's flute-playing is gently conversational, and the unison opening of the *Allegro* in HWV363b is typical of the impressive understanding between Egarr and his soloists. Pavlo Beznosiuk's contributions are by turns tender and refined (the opening *Andante* of HWV361) and witty. The violinist receives the four sonatas that were clearly not by Handel (HWV368, 370, 372 and 373) but plays them gracefully enough for issues of attribution to be temporarily forgotten. I particularly enjoyed Frank de Bruine's fluent oboe-playing. Egarr has dispensed with cello doubling the bass-line of

IN THE STUDIO

the keyboard accompaniments (either approach is equally idiomatic, but I missed the stronger delineation of the bass-line that a cello gives); his harpsichord realisations give sensitive support to the soloist in the limelight. The occasional flamboyant keyboard passages have plenty of crispness and character (eg the second movement of HWV362) but are light enough to avoid dogmatically forcing the soloists to fight for attention. This Op 1 does not supersede the superb Hyperion set (which, spread across three CDs, features a few extra sonatas) but the AAM's delightful playing is warmly recommended as an alternative.

David Vickers

Krommer

String Quartets – Op 19 No 2; Op 74 No 3; Op 103 No 3
Marcolini Quartet (Jörg Buschhaus, Frauke Pöhl *vn*; Stefan Schmidt *va* Martin Fritz *vc*)

CAvi Music © AVI8553142 (78' • DDD)

Roll over Beethoven, it's time to give Krommer a chance



Unusually there were only 12 symphonies, so Krommer (1759-1831) made a surprisingly tiny contribution to an art form that was hugely popular at the time. But he wrote 77 string quartets, and if the three offered here are representative of his creative impulses in this medium, we ought to have the lot. Whether he knew it or not, Krommer in his own distinctive way was anticipating much that was to come.

Try the strangest work, Op 103 No 3 (Padrta 75), the first movement development almost like a cadenza of tenebrous undertones, brighter spots and explosive chords, the slow movement a peculiar mixture of *andante* and *scherzo*, and a Minuet so grim that it contradicts the term. Oddities and pitfalls abound; but the Marcolini Quartet, cleanly recorded, highly disciplined and working together as a real team, understand the interpretative problems involved. They hold the music on a tight rein, and what could sound loosely disparate emerges tersely whole. They also lavish the same care on the other works, paying particular attention to instrumental balance and clarity in the *Adagio* of Op 74 No 3 (Padrta 62).

Beethoven may have seen a lot of himself in Krommer, which is probably why he picked a fight with him during a concert of both their works at Count Lichnowsky's palace – and was reprimanded for his behaviour. But listeners don't have to reprimand themselves if they take a while to appreciate this adventurously personal music. Go on, climb out of the box and investigate this disc.

Nalen Anthoni

Nash's Brahms

The Nash Ensemble follow up their October 2008 release of Brahms's Piano Quartets Nos 1 and 3 with the composer's Second Piano Quartet plus the Clarinet Trio, recorded during July for Onyx. Featuring pianist Ian Brown, violinist Marianne Thorsen, viola-player Lawrence Power, cellist Paul Watkins and clarinetist Richard Hosford, the recording is the group's fourth Brahms album for Onyx after a disc of String Quintets (to be reviewed next month) and the String Sextets, released in May 2007 and awarded a Gramophone Editor's Choice as "superb new versions, crisp and clear, beautifully coordinated, with plenty of light and shade, and infectious springing rhythms".

Guitar duo

This month guitarists Stein-Erik Olsen and Oliver Chassain release the world premiere recording of "The Works of Ida Presti for Two Guitars" for Simax. Presti, a French classical guitarist who formed a world-famous duo with Alexandre Lagoya, died in 1967. Included on the album are her 12 duos for guitar – *Tarantelle*, *Sérénade*, *Valse de l'An nouveau*, *Étude fantasque*, *Danse gitane*, *La hongroise*, *Dance d'Avila*, *Prélude*, *Bagatelle*, *Espagne*, *Etude No 1* and *Berceuse à ma mère*.

Bring on Britten

Following its October launch with the Aronowitz Ensemble's debut album, the Sonimage label issues a disc of music by Britten performed by the Elias String Quartet in November. Recorded a year ago at Potton Hall in Suffolk, the recording includes Britten's String Quartets Nos 2 and 3, and Three Divertimenti. The album is the Quartet's third recording and the first in an intended cycle of Britten's complete music for string quartet.



Working as one: Andreas Groethuysen and Yaara Tal



Is less more?
 These piano duettists could persuade you it is

Mendelssohn

Octet, Op 20 (arr pf duet). Symphony No 1, Op 11 (arr pf duet, vn & vc)[†]
Yaara Tal, Andreas Groethuysen pf
 with "Oliver Wille *vn* Mikayel Hakhnazaryan *vc*"
 Sony Classical © 88697 43160-2 (59' • DDD)

Why record, say, the piano duet version of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, even in the composer's own reduction? Why record the string quartet version of Haydn's *Seven Last Words*, an uneasy if authentic compromise, given the genius of the orchestral original? Such arrangements were made as expedients, perhaps to facilitate rehearsal or to offer greater performance (or sales) opportunities. But this is the 21st century; domestic music-making is on the decline, and without rising from my laptop I can instantly access tens and even hundreds of recordings of the full-blown versions of these works. The same goes for the Octet, Mendelssohn's miraculous teenage masterpiece. So why record the composer's piano-duet arrangement?

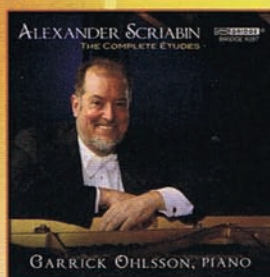
The reason is simple when the musicianship is as fine as on offer here. Yaara Tal and Andreas Groethuysen have given us *inter alia* a series of Mozart's four-hand music, acclaimed in these pages, and a bumper box of the complete Schubert piano duets, both demonstrating, as on this disc, a keen appreciation of structure, a scintillating range of colours and a compelling lightness of touch. Listen especially to the quicksilver, Goethe-inspired *Scherzo*, the "greatest hit" from the work, which Mendelssohn also orchestrated for

insertion into his First Symphony. For this arrangement of the symphony, in which Mendelssohn channels his inner Beethoven and Weber, Tal and Groethuysen are joined by *ad libitum* violin and cello. If an alien landed on Earth and had his first experience of Mendelssohn via these performances, he'd marvel at the wonder of the music and never have an inkling it could have been conceived for anything other than these forces. **David Thresher**

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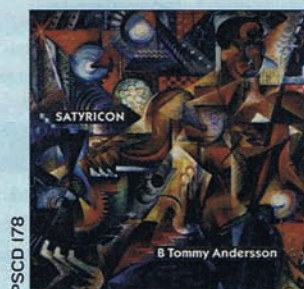
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Martinů

Piano Trios – No 1, 'Cinq Pièces brèves', H193; No 2, H327; No 3, H332. *Bergerettes*, H275
Kinsky Trio Prague (Lucie Sedláková Hůlová *vn*
Martin Sedlák *vc* Jaroslava Pěchočová *pf*)

Praga Digitals © PRD/DSD250 256
(67' • DDD/DSD)

Bergerettes – comparative version:
Puella Trio (4/08) (ARCO) UP0103 2131

Martinů's music for piano trio in vibrant performances from Prague



As a medium, the modern piano trio is notoriously tricky to balance. Differences in the instruments' tonal power as they have developed since Beethoven's day have made

composers fight shy of the form, even Hindemith who wrote masterpieces for every other genre. But it is inaccurate to aver that only Ravel and Shostakovich – in his Second – convincingly essayed the form after 1900: Martinů wrote four times for this combination, plus a concerto, works that blithely ignore the technical issues. True, Martinů's grappling with the full "piano trio" genre did not come until 1950 with the D minor Second, with No 3 following a year later, but the marvellous *Cinq Pièces brèves*, later numbered as Trio No 1, came 20 years before. Why he opted to omit the sparkling *Bergerettes* (1939) from the sequence is unclear; perhaps it was just too illustrative. The Kinsky Trio catch the spirit of both early sets very neatly in performances of great charm and dexterity. In the *Bergerettes* they even manage to integrate the bold final *Moderato* – Trio (*poco allegretto*) more convincingly than did the *Puella Trio* (4/08) with whom they are otherwise largely on a par (the *Puella* coupling *Bergerettes* with Shostakovich's adolescent First and Schnittke's bleak late trio).

The Second and Third Trios are relatively sombre creations for Martinů, in that there are lengthy passages of serious demeanour in their opening spans without the characteristic smile. This breaks through in good time, however, a feature nicely caught in these well executed and enthusiastic performances. Praga's sound is spot on, the three instruments carefully but naturally balanced as a satisfying ensemble. Warmly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Liszt

Benedictus and *Offertorium*, S381. *Elegie* No 1, S130. *Elegie* No 2, S131. *Epithalam*, S129. *Grand Duo concertant*, S128. *La lugubre gondola*, S134. *Romance oubliée*, S132. *Die Drei Zigeuner*, S383
Friedemann Eichhorn *vn* Rolf-Dieter Arens *pf*
Hänssler Classic © CD98 588 (58' • DDD)

Eichhorn and Arens explore Liszt's neglected works for violin and piano

Liszt's violin music remains a relative rarity in the catalogues. Some of it is immediately



recognisable, having its roots in solo piano works, which Liszt then refashioned, often for a choice of string instruments. They are mostly late works, the *Grand Duo concertant* being an exception, an elaboration based on a song by the violinist-composer Charles-Philippe Lafont, effective enough though less ambitious than Liszt's brilliant opera paraphrases for piano.

The disc opens with the first *Elegie*, striking for the way the violin line ascends into nothingness, its tonality, while not entirely ambiguous, at least temporarily suspended. It is works such as this, the second *Elegie* and the *Romance oubliée* (originally a song that Liszt then arranged for violin, viola or cello) that best suit violinist Friedemann Eichhorn, the slight graininess in his tone never oversweetening Liszt's potent austerity; his tuning, too, is impeccable. He's perhaps less at home with the more overtly virtuosic works, such as the *Die Drei Zigeuner* paraphrase and the *Grand Duo concertant*. For these, Liszt sought the advice of violinist colleagues, aware that he couldn't transfer his natural ease on the piano to a string instrument. There's plenty of agility on offer from both players in the gypsy paraphrase, a collaboration with his friend Ede Reményi, but soundwise Eichhorn can become edgy, and in the *Grand Duo* he sounds a little underpowered.

As arrangements and self-borrowings go, *La lugubre gondola* works less well in its present incarnation than the version for piano alone, the effect of its amorphous tonality lessened by the distinct timbres of the two instruments. And the *Benedictus* and *Offertorium*, taken from his grand *Hungarian Coronation Mass* sound slightly uneasy in their simpler garb, sensitively played though they are.

Reservations aside, the value of this disc lies in its exploration of a facet of Liszt's output for too long neglected. The notes by Leslie Howard are as authoritative and informative as you'd expect.

Harriet Smith

Mendelssohn

String Quartet No 1, Op 12^a. String Quintet No 1, Op 18^b. Menuetto^b

^aPražák Quartet (Václav Remes, Vlastimil Holec *vns*
^bJosef Kluson *va* Michal Kanka *vc*); ^bZemlinsky Quartet (František Souček, Petr Střížek *vns* Petr Holman *va* Vladimír Fortin *vc*)

Praga Digitals © PRD/DSD250 252
(59' • DDD/DSD)

Quartet – selected comparison:
Quatuor Mosaïques (9/98) (AUVI) E8622

Quintet – selected comparison:
Mendelssohn Qt, Mann (BIS) BIS-CD1254

Warm and attentive readings of Mendelssohn's early chamber works

Mendelssohn's obsession with Beethoven is clear from the very outset of his First Quartet, with an



opening that breathes the air of the late quartets (Beethoven had died just two years earlier). But then Mendelssohn-the-youngman takes over, presenting a theme with a hop, skip

and a jump in its step. This is a warm and attentive performance by the Pražák Quartet, whose long experience is evident from their instinctive dialogue and the sense that they know every corner of this music. It's an altogether convivial experience, and that goes for the remainder of the movements too. Particularly effective is the faster central section of the *Canzonetta*, which is devilishly difficult but absolutely under control here, and full of detail. Their sustained slow movement, too, is an essay in tenderness. This is a fine reading, though if you want something rawer, with a greater emphasis on Mendelssohn's innovative qualities, you may prefer the Quatuor Mosaïques.

The Zemlinsky Quartet are younger members of the same great Czech string quartet tradition (perhaps wisely relinquishing their original name: the Penguin Quartet). They borrow the Pražák's viola-player for Mendelssohn's First Quintet. There's a historical reasoning behind this coupling: the first performance of Op 12 was a private one, given by friends. A week later they swelled their ranks to give the first performance of the final version of the Quintet. This was a work that long occupied him, and at one point it had an unusually dark minuet, which is appended at the end of this disc. Though it makes an intriguing addition, with its air of quiet desperation, Mendelssohn's instincts were right – it would have sat oddly within the quintet.

The players revel in the unorthodox aspects of the writing, the slipping, sliding melody that opens the finale, the casual little ornaments with which Mendelssohn strews his melodic lines, the rhetoric of the slow movement. The Mendelssohn Quartet with Robert Mann are a tad faster in the opening movement, which is very effective, and perhaps they reveal better the music's inner counterpoint, but overall this is a welcome addition to the catalogue. **Harriet Smith**

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expressive style and a determination to present the character of each movement in the strongest, most searching light. Her range of tone is

most appealing, and if some of the contrasts – in the Allemande of the De Fesch Sonata, for example – seem to lie outside the bounds of polite 18th-century music-making, that's perhaps just the impression players in the Italian style gave at the time.

East can also play with refined elegance, as in the Couperin Prélude. However, in the Couperin pieces the purist in me began to feel uncomfortable. Unfortunately, three of them are arrangements by the cellist Paul Bazelaire which make gratuitous alterations to the text, and, believe me, Couperin knew best. And East plays the Plaine, originally for two viols, without the second part, so depriving it of much of its sweetness and charm.

Her Bach Suite is typically full of character. The Prelude is slow and meditative, and the Allemande and Sarabande are also on the slow side. The Sarabande, beautifully poised, has an air of quiet solemnity, but in the Allemande East's decisive separation of the phrases impedes continuity. These more stately pieces are balanced by forceful, energetic accounts of the Corrente and Gigue, and it's this intense spirit in communicating the music that makes for a memorable recital.

Duncan Druce

Schumann

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 105; No 2, Op 121. In der Fremde (arr Roth/Gallardo). Aus den hebräischen Gesängen (arr Roth/Gallardo). Widmung (arr Roth/Gallardo). Abendlied (arr Joachim)
Linus Roth *vs* José Gallardo *pf*
Challenge Classics © CC72341 (62' • DDD)

Sonatas – selected comparison:

Widmann, Várjon (A/O8) (ECM) 476 6744

Abendlied (arr Joachim) – selected comparison:

Isserlis, Várjon (S/O9) (HYPER) CDA67661

A spirited recording but Roth and Gallardo are entering a strong field



Schumann's violin sonatas have been getting some much deserved attention of late, with Carolin Widmann and Dénes Várjon giving exemplary performances of all three,

superbly recorded, while Steven Isserlis, again with Várjon, borrowed the third, to mesmerising effect. In the face of such performances, the long-held belief that Schumann's later works are somehow inferior is looking increasingly untenable. Now we have a disc of the first two sonatas played by young, fast-emerging talents: the German violinist Linus Roth has been scooping up prizes for some time now, and has

formed a lively and creative partnership with the Argentinian pianist, José Gallardo.

The two sonatas here are ravishing creations, but they present considerable challenges in interpretation. It's all too easy to get embroiled in the details of Schumann's writing, with his characteristic wide-slung melodies and rhythmically ever-changing ideas, at the expense of the overall shape. The second movement of the First Sonata, for instance, has a skittish quality, yet wistfulness constantly intervenes, shadowing the music with doubt, something Widmann conveys more potently than Roth. In the finale Roth and Gallardo offer bounding energy but again they probe the depths less powerfully than their rivals. And while they convey Schumann's rhetoric in the Second Sonata to good effect, it's Widmann and Várjon who convey best the music's darker tensions.

Instead of the Third Sonata, the new disc is rounded out by four song transcriptions, three of them made by the players themselves. As arrangements per se, "In der Fremde" works particularly well; the separation in register between violin and piano in "Aus den hebräischen Gesängen" and "Widmung" lessens the intensely wrought textures of the originals. In Joachim's reworking of "Abendlied", too, they can't compete with the utterly rapturous Isserlis. **Harriet Smith**

'A Place Between'

Cage In a Landscape^a Górecki Good Night, 'In memoriam Michael Vyner', Op 63^{abc} Knaifel O Heavenly King^{def} Pärt Da pacem Domine^g. Hymn to a Great City^h Tavener Ikon of Joy and Sorrowⁱ Silvestrov Ikon^j. 25.X.1893...In memoriam PI Tchaikovsky – No 2, 'Lullaby'^{de} Patricia Rozario *sop* bVourneen Ryan *fls* Stephen Kelly *perc* Ioana Petcu-Colan *vn* Michael McHale *pf/cels* Callino Quartet (Sarah Sexton, Michaela Girardi *vn*s Rebecca Jones *va* Sarah McMahon *vc*)
Louth Contemporary Music Society © LCMS901 (65' • DDD)

The godfathers of spiritual minimalism in a beautifully understated recording



It's difficult not to become increasingly sceptical about the way record companies exploit the commercial success of so-called "spiritual minimalist" composers such as Pärt, Górecki and Tavener, despite the fact that their music is fundamentally anti-materialistic. Many have also been cynical about the term "spiritual minimalism" – not least the composers themselves – as a catch-all branding gimmick, but "A Place Between" does much to reinforce the view that in fact a common bond unites them.

Don't expect to hear unbridled virtuosity or showmanship here: *lento* is about as dynamic as it gets, at least on the surface level. However, there are moments of understated beauty, notably in Valentin Silvestrov's Lullaby for violin and piano. Written to commemorate the centenary of

Tchaikovsky's death, a series of haunting melodic variations are woven in the violin around a descending, chaconne-like chord progression, with the piano progressively reinforcing each melodic statement. Russian minimalist Alexander Knaifel also inhabits a similar musical universe, as heard here in *O Heavenly King*.

Silvestrov's Lullaby is more immediately expressive than Pärt's similarly conceived and better-known *Spiegel im Spiegel*. His music is represented here in *Hymn to a Great City* for two pianos (multitracked on this recording by the talented Michael McHale): a cleverly constructed "mirror" of imperfect-perfect cadences (ie C major to G major and back again). If the majority of the disc's music appears to be in suspended animation, Górecki's *Good Night* brings proceedings almost to a standstill, with the final movement "sounding out" in complete silence. Appropriate then that the dreamy *In a Landscape* by the patron saint of silence himself, John Cage, should round things off. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

'Kontra Wagner'

Chabrier Souvenirs de Munich (orch David Matthews) Wagner/Hindemith The Flying Dutchman – Overture Krenek Serenade, Op 4^a Wagner Träume^a. Siegfried Idyll. Wesendonck Lieder – No 5, Träume (arr Frackenpohl)^c Monti Czárdás (arr Kullnig)^b Webern Movement for String Trio, Op posth Members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Michael Hasel with Thomas Timm, Peter Brem *vn*s Gabor Tarkövi *tp* dManfred Preis *cl*
Col Legno © WWE1CD60018 (72' • DDD)

Classical and contemporary music juxtaposed with intriguing results



A fascinating collection in the Berlin Philharmonic Kontrapunkte chamber music series of live concerts, devised by Claudio Abbado (and continued by Sir Simon Rattle) for the

Salzburg Easter Festival, mixing classical and contemporary music. Wagner's own lusciously romantic *Träume* for violin and orchestra is a winning miniature, and Monti's *Czárdás* makes a sparkling gypsy contrast. Later we return to *Träume* played ebulliently and audaciously on the trumpet with a piquant accompaniment of four bassoons! Chabrier's *Souvenirs* is a disrespectful French set of miniatures making light of *Tristan*. It is quite good fun in its way, but the Hindemith joke performance of the Overture to *The Flying Dutchman* features wrong notes so well played that the humour is elusive. The highlights are a passionately refined account of the *Siegfried Idyll* and the highly engaging Krenek Serenade for clarinet and string trio, which is wonderfully elegant. The Webern piece might better have been used as the penultimate number rather than the finale, as it is hardly endearing to my ears. Fine, clear recording, but the elaborate documentation has almost nothing about the music itself. **Ivan March**

Instrumental

Hewitt's Handel and Haydn • Terrific Tabea Zimmermann • Rediscovering Richter

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Martin Schmeding *org*

Cybele ② SACD030 802 (75' • DDD/DSD)

Played on the Gottfried-Silbermann organ of the Hofkirche, Dresden

The Goldbergs on the organ – and it's a magnificent instrument as well



The argument goes like this: while Bach specified that the *Goldberg Variations* were for the harpsichord, he also specified that they were for a

harpsichord of two keyboards. Consequently, an arrangement for organ, with its multiple keyboards, is more valid than one for the single-keyboard piano. That's to paraphrase Martin Schmeding's extended justification for his own arrangement of the work. It's certainly a logical argument and makes one wonder why organists haven't been beating a path to perform the complete *Goldberg Variations*.

The answer comes pretty quickly into this sumptuously recorded disc. We have here a magnificent Silbermann organ dating from 1755 and saved from the fire-bombing of Dresden to be resurrected in 1971 and returned as close as possible to its original tonal state in 2002. Schmeding has thought out every nuance of his performance and his registrations are mapped out with painstaking care in the booklet. But the wealth of colour, the breadth of tone and dynamic and the sheer beauty of the sound only serve to obscure the genius of Bach's creation (a genius generously analysed in a hefty booklet-note which reads rather like an extract from a postgraduate thesis). There are moments when the pedal is lost in the mist of the acoustic, and other times when the spatial layout of the pipes, magnificently captured in this demonstration-quality recording, has isolated notes leaping out, apparently randomly, from the extremes of the stereo spread (that's a real problem with the 16 foot Fagott in the very first variation).

As a recording of a truly fabulous organ played with immaculate musicality, this is a disc to be recommended unreservedly. As a viable alternative to the harpsichord recordings of this great work, I have my doubts; but it certainly puts it into a wholly different perspective.

Marc Rochester

WF Bach

Harpichord Sonatas – FK3; FK7. Fantasies – FK19; FK23; FK2v2. Polonaises – No 1; No 7; No 8; No 11. Fugues – No 1; No 2; No 3; No 6.

Maude Gratton *hpd/clav*

Mirare ② MIR088 (65' • DDD)

A gifted young harpsichordist tackles one of music's great originals: splendid



Wilhelm Friedemann Bach's was a famously troubled life, offering all too easy fodder for armchair psychologists. Let's leave that to them, and marvel at what

glorious music he was able to salvage from the wreck. In the Fantasias, the music trips over itself in its rush towards the next harmonic goal, sometimes appearing to collapse several progressions within a single gesture. The Polonaises, which ensured that his name survived into the 19th century before his father's was rediscovered, are more ordered but famously shot through with unexpected, startling effusions. The fugues, similarly,

'This is, in short, the best single selection of WF Bach's keyboard music I've yet heard'

alternate between contrapuntal passages and more discursive episodes, and the sonatas (a form Wilhelm Friedemann seems to have pioneered) are filled with the excitement of new formal and expressive possibilities. The music flirts with incoherence and sometimes tips the precarious balance; but this recital is so well constructed that every piece hits the bullseye.

This is, in short, the best single selection of WF Bach's keyboard music I've yet heard, and there have been several very impressive ones. Maude Gratton's instinct for programming reveals great maturity and perception, and her playing is simply captivating, seeming to follow the composer in his flights of fancy and accesses of rigour with equal deftness. She's not afraid to share in his risk-taking either; it takes a sure touch to extract percussive effects from a clavichord without sacrificing pitch (though close miking certainly helps). The pathos of the slow movements is restrained but palpable: this

is playing of real purpose and subtlety, and music that demands to be heard. What more can I say, but that this has gone straight to my iPod.

Fabrice Fitch

Chopin • Chopin/Liszt

Chopin Etudes – Op 10; Op 25

Chopin/Liszt Polish Songs, Op 74

Luiza Borac *pf*

Avie ② AV2161 (80' • DDD)

Thoughtful Etudes and a chance to hear the six Polish Song transcriptions



It is comparatively rare to encounter on disc all six of Liszt's Chopin song transcriptions in sequence. Though No 1, "The Maiden's Wish", is often heard

with No 4, "My Darling", not far behind, the others are played about as frequently as Chopin's songs are sung. It is even rarer to hear them played quite as well as this, easily the best versions of those currently available, not merely because of the intimacy and easeful *rubato* Luiza Borac brings to the music but for the lovely recorded sound. These are qualities true of the whole disc, which was produced, edited and engineered by the late John Barnes, and is issued as a celebration of his life.

Having charmed us into submission with the *Chants polonais*, this talented Romanian essays one of the piano's most testing challenges, a field bristling with superlative rivals. Speed and éclat are not the only criteria by which to judge performances of the 24 Etudes but they are essential elements. Miss Borac, though no slouch, does not present a challenge to Pollini, Lugansky, Perahia, Wild or the young Ashkenazy inter alia. Compare her cautious 1'38" for Op 10 No 2 (often deemed to be the most difficult) with Lugansky, my current favourite, despatching it in a brilliantly articulated 1'16". But her grace and radiant tone, especially in the more lyrical studies (Op 10 No 11 and Op 25 No 5 are good examples), help provide a convincing alternative to more testosterone-driven versions. Malcolm MacDonald contributes an excellent booklet, though he knocks off two years from Chopin's already too-short life.

Jeremy Nicholas

Handel • Haydn

Handel Chaconne, HWV435. Keyboard Suites, Set 1 – No 2 in F, HWV427; No 8, HWV433

Haydn Keyboard Sonata No 62, HobXVI/52. Sonata un piccolo divertimento: Variations, HobXVII/6.

Angela Hewitt *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67736 (67' • DDD)

Angela Hewitt identifies the emotional affinity between Handel and Haydn



Isn't it odd to lump Handel with Haydn? Not for Haydn who, like Beethoven, thought Handel the greatest composer of all. Not for Angela Hewitt either, but

for different reasons. She senses an emotional affinity between the composers, just as she senses religious connotations in the music of Bach – a perception shared with Edwin Fischer whom she appears to venerate.

In her booklet-note she also “unashamedly” admits to sharing with him a relish for an old edition of Handel's Chaconne that differs from one based on other sources. And she observes the repeat only in the theme, not in the variations. “Authenticists” might be dismayed and might even quail at her introspective *rubato* in the Suites, two of eight that Handel himself published in 1720 when George I granted him a Privilege of Copyright.

But that's Hewitt, individual, and equally probing in the deeper waters of Haydn's Variations where, towards the end, the music reflects a composer whose own faith seems to be sorely tested by personal tragedy. Hewitt is with him in his sobriety, lightness, fury and eventual exhaustion. Regrettably she omits the whimsical five bars – included in the autograph but not in Artaria's first published version – that bridge the last variation to the return of the theme. Yet all has to be forgiven as Hewitt unfolds the drama of the last sonata through proud gesture and pathos. Rhetoric may be understated but her point of view grows with repetition. The recording never stands in your way.

Nalen Anthoni

Mendelssohn

Organ Sonatas, Op 65

William Whitehead *org*

Chandos © CHAN10532 (72' • DDD)

Played on the Lincoln organ of Buckingham Palace, London

Mendelssohn

Organ Sonatas, Op 65. Three Preludes and Fugues, Op 37. Allegro, Chorale and Fugue. Allegro in B flat major. Andante in D major. Andante in F major. Andante con moto in G minor. Andante and Variations in D major. Fugues – in E minor; in F minor. Fughetta in D major. Nachspiel in D major. Passacaglia in C minor ►

Norse sense

This month pianist Håkon Austbø releases “Norwegian Imperatives” on SACD for Aurora. Included on the disc are Fartein Valen's Four Pieces for Piano and Intermezzo, Klaus Egge's Sonata No 2 (*Patetica*), Finn Mortensen's Sonata and Rolf Wallin's Seven Imperatives. This disc follows Austbø's 2008 recording of Messiaen's *Oiseaux exotiques* with the Norwegian Army Band, Bergen, conducted by Peter Szilvay, also released on the Aurora label.

Chopin list

Following a dalliance with Haydn's late piano sonatas earlier this year, Alain Planès has been busy recording a special Chopin collection for Harmonia Mundi. Reconstructing a programme given by the composer on a Pleyel piano in February 1842, Planès performs on an 1837 Pleyel instrument from the collection of Anthony Sidey. Featured on the album are a selection of Preludes, Etudes, Nocturnes and Mazurkas, plus the Ballade, Op 47, Impromptu, Op 51, and Grande valse, Op 42. Planès's last Chopin disc for Harmonia Mundi included the Cello Sonata, Op 65, performed with Lluís Claret, released in April 2005.

Shost assurance

In May, pianist Alexander Melnikov recorded music by Shostakovich for Harmonia Mundi. The two-disc set includes the composer's complete Preludes and Fugues, Op 87, and is due for release early next year. These performances follow Melnikov's February 2008 Rachmaninov disc, which was acclaimed by Gramophone's Bryce Morrison for his “formidable pianism” and “unfaltering assurance and dazzling virtuosity”, which “makes light of every difficulty” (4/08).



Tabea Zimmermann brings out every facet of the music

MARCO BORGGREVE



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Bach • Reger

Bach Solo Cello Suites – No 1, BWV1007; No 2, BWV1008

Reger Solo Viola Suites, Op 131d

Tabea Zimmermann *va*

Myrios Classics © MYR003 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Despite the scarcity of repertoire for solo viola, Reger's three suites have never achieved widespread circulation. It's not the most original, distinctive music, perhaps, yet it's beautifully conceived for the instrument, and the balance between neo-Baroque features and a more up-to-date étude style is cleverly maintained. And in Tabea Zimmermann the suites have an interpreter able to bring out every facet of the music, from the introspective, melancholy opening movement of the First Suite to the spirit and verve of the First and Third Suites' finales.

Her beautiful tone, constantly varied, and lively musical intelligence are, of course, ideal assets in Bach as well as Reger. Transposed up an octave, Bach's cello-writing is equally apt for viola, and though the viola can't match the dark sonority of the cello in the Prelude and Sarabande of the Second Suite, there are compensations. The G major Suite's Prelude may lack the gravitas a cellist can bring to it, but Zimmermann imparts an airy quality that's just as appealing. And her vivacious accounts of the concluding Giges of both suites entirely banish the lugubrious impression the larger instrument can sometimes leave.

Zimmermann has an excellent appreciation of Baroque style, but her modern equipment can lead to the creation of general rather than particular effects – the *spiccato* bowing in BWV1008's Corrente results in the loss of details of phrasing; a similar smoothing of detail comes as a result of the very quiet repeats in the corresponding movement of BWV1007. It's a magnificent recital, however, with Zimmermann proving a true fairy godmother to the viola's Cinderella image.

Duncan Druce

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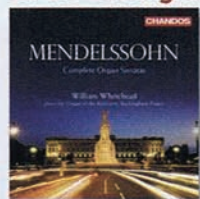
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Hans Fagius *org*

Daphne ② DAPHNE1033 (157' • DDD)

Played on the Åkerman & Lund organ of Kokkola Church, Finland

Mendelssohn's sonatas come up fresh on the Buckingham Palace organ

Mendelssohn's six sonatas have been part of British organists' repertorial bedrock for generations since their publication in 1845. Together with the less frequently played Three Preludes and Fugues (1837) they pay homage to Baroque masters (Bach, especially) while nodding pointedly towards the non-liturgical possibilities of Romantic

Lieder. With their four-square phrases, a carefully judged (and rather tame) harmonic palette and lashings of "purposeful" counterpoint, Mendelssohn's organ pieces can become tedious and torpid.

Under the hands (and feet) of William Whitehead they sound fresh. It helps that he plays the three-manual Lincoln organ originally built for Brighton's Royal Pavilion in 1818 and now housed in the Ballroom of Buckingham Palace. Its 28 stops produce a satisfying *pleno*. The slightly bumpy wind supply and occasional action noise (accentuated by Chandos's admirably close miking) really draw the listener into the music. This is noble playing of the highest order.

No less technically assured and musically adroit is Hans Fagius. His two-disc set includes the same music as Whitehead with the addition of the Preludes and Fugues and an additional 13 pieces without opus number. Despite having a larger (and almost brand-new) instrument and a bigger acoustic, Fagius's interpretations seem more efficient, stolid and less involving than those of Whitehead. Although the larger works are despatched fluently and cleanly, they need more registrational variety. One of the finest things on this release is the fine Andante and Variations in D of 1844. Here, Mendelssohn's inherent lyricism shines through. But if you want a stimulating performance of the Sonatas I'd plump for Whitehead's disc every time.

Malcolm Riley

Scriabin

Waltzes – Op 1; Op 38; in D flat major. Polonaise, Op 21. Fantasy, Op 28. Deux Poèmes, Op 32. Poème tragique, Op 34. Poème satanique, Op 36. Poème, Op 41. Trois Morceaux, Op 52. Albumblatt, Op 58. Vers la flamme, Op 72. Deux Danses, Op 73

Xiayin Wang *pf*

Naxos ③ 8 570412 (65' • DDD)

Brilliance and refinement from a pianist fully in tune with Scriabin's sound world

Xiayin Wang, Chinese-born but American-



based, offers a Scriabin recital with a difference. Avoiding large-scale works (the sonatas), she takes us on a carefully planned journey offering a bird's-eye view of the composer's

restless, meteoric career. An exception is provided by the Fantasy where Wang's scintillating technique makes light of every virtuoso challenge and where her commitment makes you wonder why such starry, ultra-romantic poetry is not in the repertoire of many more pianists. Here, as Wang puts it in her excellent notes, Scriabin "abandons Chopinesque poise for abandonment". Already a far cry from her curtain-raiser, two waltzes composed when Scriabin was 14 are clearly besotted with Chopin. The single Polonaise, too, while teetering on the edge of experimental horizons, is a fierce memory of Chopin and it is only when you arrive at the later works that you meet the composer's more obsessive, opalescent and fragmented style. On the other hand, the Op 38 Waltz unites all aspects of Scriabin's multifaceted genius, a magical and dazzling memory of Liszt's *Valses oubliées*.

Wang plays all this music with a special brilliance and refinement, and if you occasionally doubt her musical range in the darker regions of Scriabin's personality, she comes up with a performance of *Vers la flamme* that moves superbly from a brooding menace to a final apocalyptic blaze. Finely recorded, Wang's recital provides an unusually perceptive introduction to Scriabin's piano music, and I now look forward to hearing her in a wide range of repertoire.

Bryce Morrison

Sviatoslav Richter ①

'The Russian Piano Tradition: The Neuhaus School'

Schubert Piano Sonatas – No 16, D845; No 17, D850.

Impromptu, D899 No 2

Sviatoslav Richter *pf*

APR mono ② APR5669 (78' • ADD)

Sviatoslav Richter ①

'Early Recordings, Vol 1: 1948-1956'

Chopin Etude, Op 25 No 5 **Schubert** Impromptu – D899 No 2; D935 No 2. Moment musical, D780 No 1 **Schumann** Fantasiestücke, Op 12 – No 1, Des Abends; No 2, Aufschwung; No 3, Warum?; No 5, In der Nacht; No 8, Ende von Lied. Humoreske, Op 20

Sviatoslav Richter *pf*

Naxos Historical mono ③ 8 111352 (66' • ADD)

Lev Oborin ①

'The Russian Piano Tradition: The Igumnov School'

Beethoven Six Ecosais, WoO83. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 2 No 2 **Chopin** Etudes, Op 25 – No 2; No 3; No 5. Mazurka No 30, Op 50 No 1. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58 **Liszt** Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 2 **Tchaikovsky** The Seasons, Op 37b – No 6, June

(Barcarolle); No 11, November (On the troika); No 12, December (Yuletide)

Lev Oborin *pf*

APR mono ② APR5668 (80' • ADD)

Icy winds blow over Richter's Schubert but Lev Oborin is a sensitive recitalist

Sviatoslav Richter's Schubert has always provoked controversy and APR's reissue of recordings dating from 1956-57 is a savage reminder of a pianist of uncompromising vision. Rhythms are held in a vice-like grip and there can rarely have been a more radical shift of simple-minded notions of Viennese charm and gentility. Indeed, I was quickly reminded of a telephone call I received some years ago from Richter's compatriot Nikolai Demidenko, asking me in savage tones

whether I considered Schubert "some sort of sweetie-pie" (he was responding to a journalist who found his Schubert too wintry). Certainly there is little sweetness from Richter, though his remorseless tread is unforgettably countered in the Trio of the A minor Sonata's *Scherzo* which is played with such poise and lucidity that it soars to ultimate heights of poetry. A suitably icy wind blows across the finale (a not-so-distant relation of the finale of Mozart's sonata in the same key) and even in the exultant, less despairing pages of the D major Sonata Richter's adamant strength and rhythm are paramount. You may miss Kempff's beguiling lilt in the sing-a-song-of-sixpence finale or Gilels's emotionalism in the *con moto* but you can never be less than awed by such consummate if chilling mastery.

Naxos's issue of recordings dating from 1948-56 includes more austere Schubert (though the A flat Impromptu, D935, is an exception). But when you turn to Richter's Schumann you enter another world. Here this great pianist reminds you that Schumann has always been central to the repertoires of the finest Russian pianists (Moiseiwitsch, Horowitz, Gilels and Richter). Rarely in its entire history can the *Humoreske* have been given with such energy and refinement, such poetry and fantasy. Try the *Einfach und zart* and the following Intermezzo with its joyous carillon of bells, or the final pages where Richter truly recalls "magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn". Five movements from the Op 12 *Fantasiestücke* complete the picture, and so too does Chopin's E minor Etude with Richter's slowly spiralling and assuaging view of the heavenly middle section. Lev Oborin, whose

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career was launched by his triumph in the inaugural 1927 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, was clearly a lesser artist than Richter or Gilels, yet his recital shows a special balance of sense and sensibility.

What superb if unobtrusive technique in Chopin's F minor Etude from Op 25, what grace and sparkle in the *Scherzo* from Beethoven's Op 2 No 2 Sonata! He can be quietly spoken in the Chopin Sonata's opening *Allegro maestoso* (the reverse of Argerich's flaring brilliance or Gilels's magisterial utterance) but he is never less than authoritative and shows a special affection in his Tchaikovsky items. Not surprisingly he became not only Oistrakh's favoured partner but also a greatly respected teacher. The remastering by both APR and Naxos in the face of limitations (more obvious in Oborin's than Richter's recordings) is more than impressive.

Bryce Morrison

'Endangered'

Fennimore Five Rivers **Heitzeg** Sandhill Crane (Migration Variations) **Kennedy** Natural Perilitati **Lieberson** The Ocean that has no West and no East **Tann** Light from the Cliffs
Marthanne Verbit pf
Albany © TROY1051 (66' • DDD)

Eloquent reflections on the disappearing natural world



This is an enterprising anthology of pieces from little-known American composers, mostly based around environmental concerns. Verbit, whose persuasive Antheil

recordings are still available (11/95), has called it "an act of bearing witness to an endangered world" – an elegiac reflection rather than a campaign. The oldest piece is by Peter Lieberson, whose *Neruda Songs* made such an impression three years ago. The title came from a postcard that Takemitsu sent to Peter Serkin just before he died. Lieberson's sharply focused threnody is *in memoriam* and Serkin has recorded it (Koch, 11/00). Otherwise the works on this CD are previously unknown on disc.

Fennimore has some songs and an opera on CD and his four-movement piece is expansive. Volcanoes splurge, moths twitter; but all at great length. Hilary Tann's *Light from the Cliffs*, derived from *Here, the Cliffs* for violin and orchestra, has an atmospheric charm. John Kennedy's three-movement *Natura Perilitati* ("Endangered Natures") starts with a dirge and the repetitions of the last movement become mesmeric. Steve Heitzeg's *Sandhill Crane* is a tribute to the bird, whose high-pitched cawings end the piece. It's a refreshing series of variations, three in memory of composers – Messiaen (declamatory), Copland (textures surrounding a perfect fifth) and Cage (brief with pauses). Verbit serves her composers

well. Slightly metallic piano sound; no composer biographies.

Peter Dickinson

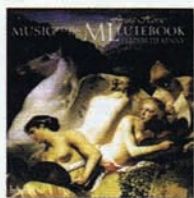
'Flying Horse'

Music from the ML Lutebook

Anonymous Allmayne and Corant. The Battle. Coranto. Gray's Inn Maske. Tom of Bedlam. John come kiss me now. Corant. Corant (de la Durette). The Flying Horse **Bachelor** A Gallyard by Mr Dan Bachelor **Ballard** La courante sarabande **D'Orléans** A volte **Dowland** Galliards – A Gallyard upon the Gallyard Before; The Battle Galliard **A Holborne** Mr Holborn's Last Will and Testament **R Johnson II** The Noble Man. Almans – Hit and Take It. Pavins – in F minor; in C minor. The Prince's Almain. Allmayne and Corant **Perrichon** Corant (Le Testament) **Sturt** A volte **Elizabeth Kenny lte**

Hyperion © CDA67776 (71' • DDD)

The horses are flying, and when you hear this disc you will be too



According to lutenist Elizabeth Kenny, the anonymous *The Flying Horse*, with its "ground bass spiced up with an exotic chord of A flat and an incitement to improvise",

seems to sum up the spirit of the so-called ML Lutebook of which it is a part.

Kenny, a highly regarded recitalist, chamber musician and continuo-player, has made a representative selection from each of the Jacobean manuscript's five major types of pieces – pavans, galliards, courantes, almains and miscellaneous song and dance tunes or grounds – and grouped them into musically satisfying pseudo-suites.

So a dark "pavin" by Robert Johnson or Antony Holborne might be lit by a jaunty song tune such as *Tom of Bedlam* or an anonymous "corant"; John Dowland's *Battle Galliard* is echoed elsewhere by

'Her considerable technical prowess is obvious in the profuse ornamentation and extended divisions throughout'

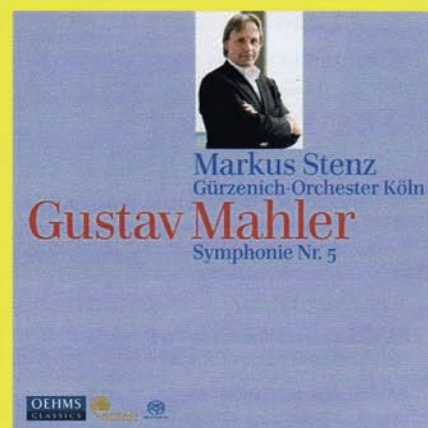
The Battle, again by that most prolific of composers, Anon; a stolid "allmayne" is teased by a sprightly "volte".

The listener is thus able to savour the individual qualities of each work while finding additional pleasure in the numerous correspondences and differences that pervade the collection – all the while marvelling not only at Kenny's acute sense of local colour, form and texture but also her considerable technical prowess, the latter especially obvious in the profuse ornamentation and extended divisions throughout.

In her booklet-notes Kenny says the ML Lutebook, being as it is in 15 different hands, is "a collaborative volume par excellence". Although her musical collaborators here are long dead, we could just as easily say the same of this highly enjoyable disc. **William Yeoman**



Mahler's Fifth where it was first performed



OC 650

105 years ago, on October 18, 1904, Gustav Mahler stepped up to the rostrum of the Gürzenich-Orchestra of Cologne to conduct the premiere of his Fifth Symphony. In recollection of this historic moment, the Gürzenich-Orchestra under its principal conductor Markus Stenz now inaugurates its complete recorded cycle of Mahler symphonies with this work. All recordings will be painstakingly prepared studio productions in audiophile SACD format.

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Beethoven bonanza

Bryce Morrison assesses the merits of two new Beethoven piano series from Bellucci and Biret

These seven CDs are a prelude to twin projects by **Giovanni Bellucci** and **Idil Biret** to record Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas and Liszt's transcriptions of the nine symphonies. Such ambition suggests a wholly exceptional ability and unwavering acceptance that for Liszt Beethoven was "like a pillar of fire which guided the Israelites through the desert". Certainly Liszt's worship of Beethoven led him to attempt a seemingly impossible task, to capture all of the composer's orchestral richness and grandeur on a single instrument, something he accomplished with a rare sobriety and transparency. The challenge for the pianist is, however, outsize and in Bellucci both Beethoven and Liszt have found an ideal champion.



From him, the Fifth Symphony opens *con brio* with a vengeance, while in the second movement he achieves a mystical sense of stillness, ideally complementing his magisterial power elsewhere. His range

of drama is immense and his concentrated energy would surely have made the late Denis Matthews return to his love of EM Forster's celebration of the Fifth Symphony in his novel *Howards End*: "It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man." Again, try Bellucci in the Seventh Symphony's first movement *Vivace* and you will hear all of his



formidable rhythmic focus in dotted rhythms, and in the finale an epic sense of giants at play.

Idil Biret, too, meets her very different challenge in the First and Second symphonies with a vitality and commitment that sadly elude her elsewhere. The Second Symphony in particular is given with



real imaginative delicacy and never more so than in the *Larghetto* where she weaves her way through every elaboration with an unflinching calm



and poise. Alas, this makes the start of her concerto cycle doubly regrettable. Here, this former student of Cortot and Kempff achieves little that we have not heard before. Her "have notes, will travel" lack of quality pervades both concertos and in the Second her cautious view of Beethoven's cadenza shows little relish for its grandeur and modernity. Her diffident opening flourish to the *Adagio* again suggests how the light has gone out of her playing and also how slow movements can be an ultimate test and musical give-away. Even the finale, while bright and nimble-fingered on one level, is oddly lacking in intensity or *joie de vivre*.

Her sonatas are scarcely more illuminating or revelatory. True, she can be outwardly deft and animated in Op 31 No 3 (always among Beethoven's most quirky and endearing works and with an opening that prompted Beethoven scholar Marian Scott to



speak of an "evening star tapping at the casement window"), but the Minuet and Trio drags and there is little to tell you the identity of the pianist. For some, such anonymity will be an advantage, but others will miss that



special final ingredient. Biret sprints eagerly through every virtuoso obstacle in Op 2 No 3 (the not so "little *Waldstein*") but loses interest in the Op 49 miniatures, offering little more than a sturdy plod in No 1 and with too little resilience, wit or charm in No 2. All this then, together with Biret's complete Chopin, Brahms and Rachmaninov cycles, suggests a labour of duty rather than love, and there is much, much more to come. The orchestral contribution in the concertos is undistinguished and IBA's piano sound is thin and glassy.

With Bellucci you enter another world of mastery. His *Hammerklavier* is formidable indeed, with Beethoven's titanic argument carried forward with a remorseless energy and a cold fury at the opposite pole to, say, Kempff's more luminous and interior view. For him the massive central *Adagio sostenuto* is "like the icy heart of some remote mountain lake" and if his tempi for the first, second and fourth movements are ferocious they are never manic in Schnabel's sense. And, unlike Schnabel's wild approximation to the notes, everything is precisely and thrillingly in place. Once more you are made aware of a super-human assault course (the final fugue) met with unwavering authority. Rubinstein, his eye settled on popular acclaim, abandoned this "Mount Everest" of the keyboard early in his career, opting for more genial and accessible fare, while Myra Hess viewed its daunting peak from a safe distance, toying with its complexities

Giovanni Bellucci:
a pianist of the
greatest distinction



in private rather than confronting them in public. But for Bellucci the *Hammerklavier* is



an epic gesture as fist-shaking and defiant as King Lear's rail against the universe. His early and middle-period Beethoven are no less urgent and concentrated, gloriously virtuosic and uplifting in the *Les adieux* Sonata's finale and fiercely individual in Op 10 No 2's central *Allegretto*, where he turns a normally plaintive interlude into high drama. His *Pathétique*,

too, tells us that from a great player technique and musicianship are indissolubly united. And if the *Moonlight* Sonata's central *Allegretto* is similarly heavily weighted, you are again made to see that this is no serene interlude between first-movement speculation and last-movement turbulence. Finally, the Op 31 No 2 Sonata (whatever did Beethoven mean by suggesting that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* – a tale of loss and rebirth – was the key to this work?) played with mesmerising trenchancy and variety.

Bellucci is clearly a pianist of the greatest distinction and the rest of his Beethoven cycle is eagerly awaited. Lontano's sound is fully worthy of the performances. **C**

The Recordings

- **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas – Nos 6, 26, 'Les adieux', & 29, 'Hammerklavier' **Giovanni Bellucci** Lontano © 2564 69196-5
- **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas – Nos 8, 'Pathétique', & 14, 'Moonlight' **Beethoven/Liszt** Symphony No 5 **Giovanni Bellucci** Lontano © 2564 69196-6
- **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas – Nos 10 & 17, 'Tempest' **Beethoven/Liszt** Symphony No 7 **Giovanni Bellucci** Lontano © 2564 69196-7
- **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas – Nos 1, 2, 19 & 20 **Idil Biret** Idil Biret Archive © 8 571251
- **Beethoven/Liszt** Symphonies – Nos 1 & 2 **Idil Biret** Idil Biret Archive © 8 571252
- **Beethoven** Piano Concertos – Nos 1 & 2 **Idil Biret** Idil Biret Archive © 8 571253
- **Beethoven** Piano Sonatas – Nos 3, 5 & 18 **Idil Biret** Idil Biret Archive © 8 571254



Idil Biret: a labour of duty rather than love

Vocal

Unknown Britten • Florian Boesch sings Schumann • Musica Secreta's secrets

Bach

Cantatas – No 13, *Meine Seufzer, meine Tränen*; No 73, *Herr, wie du willst, so schicks mit mir*; No 81, *Jesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen?*; No 144, *Nimm, was dein ist, und gehe hin*
 Gerlinde Sämman *sop* Petra Noskaiová *contr*
 Christoph Genz *ten* Jan Van der Crabben *bass*
 La Petite Bande / Sigiswald Kuijken
 Accent ② ACC25308 (65' • DDD)

More searching readings from Kuijken, despite a singular misjudgement



Each of these four Epiphany cantatas in Sigiswald Kuijken's discerning "cycle" provides further opportunity for an intense and refined vision of Bach's rhetorical world.

As in the best of the previous releases there is a strong sense, encouraged by an intimate recorded sound, of singers and instrumentalists eating from the same plate, both in contemplative arias and fully (which, here, means one-to-a-part) concerted music.

La Petite Bande offers a fine line between pulses and seeds, a type of dietary hair-shirt and succulent sweet berries, a juxtaposition which can both irradiate the imagery and neutralise it. Both the lamenting arias of the grief-stricken *Meine Seufzer*, BWV13 (a work whose luminous expressive harmonic world belies its relatively late addition to the cantata oeuvre) and the ruminating alto aria "Murre nicht" from *Nimm, was dein ist*, BWV144, are presented with memorable clarity of purpose, alongside delicate timbral flavouring from the instrumentalists.

Each of the soloists, but especially Petra Noskaiová and Jan Van der Crabben, eschew vocal vanity for meaning, not least in the way open vowels regularly match the obbligati or accompaniment. The other two singers are less settled generally, though character abounds and no more, collectively, than in the sophisticated opening chorus of BWV73, *Herr, wie du willst*, in which Bach interpolates recitatives around a tautly constructed ritornello. Kuijken never allows the tactus to tire, as can happen, and encourage a form of textual hyperbole to dominate in the solo lines.

Rather less satisfactory is the tameness of Kuijken's response to the graphic world of BWV81 and, in particular, the terrifying shipwreck aria "Die schäumenden Wellen". This great scena is treated like a spring shower in which we are gently encouraged to seek shelter. Where are "foaming and ravelling billows..."

winds of trouble rage and roar"? A singular disappointment among some more original and notable contributions from Kuijken.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Bach

Cantatas – No 57, *Selig ist der Mann*; No 110, *Unser Mund sei voll Lachens*; No 151, *Süsser Trost, mein Jesus kommt*
 Hana Blažiková *sop* Robin Blaze *counterten* Gerd Türk *ten* Peter Kooij *bass* Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki

BIS ② BIS-SACD1761 (62' • DDD)

Another admirable addition to a series reaching the last straight



From the outset, the Bach Collegium Japan deliver these 1725 Christmas pieces with supreme vitality and exuberance.

Initially, there's the reworking of the overture from the Fourth Orchestral Suite, now transformed into the virtuoso chorus of BWV110 to depict mouths "filled with laughter" at the news of Christmas Day's regal arrival.

Elsewhere these cantatas are defined by notable solo contributions (the bulk of the Thomanerchor sent on holiday for a few days, one imagines). In *Unser mund* Gerd Türk delivers his open-hearted "Ihr gedanken" with studied poise.

Robin Blaze and Peter Kooij each appear comfortably embedded in George Christian Lehms's inward-looking texts, but one is no less struck by the gusto of debutante soprano, Hana Blažiková.

More daunting for Blažiková is how she responds to the heavy history of great singers in *Selig ist der Mann*, the great "concerto in dialogo" for two solo voices. Boxing Day is of course the Feast of St Stephen where the Gospel prophesies the consolation of God's love but with the caveat of inevitable persecution. Bach took special care in setting the text here, not least where *Vox Christi's* divinity is relayed through a subtle blend of the doctrinal and other-worldliness.

If Kooij struggles to meet the authority of Barry McDaniel for Fritz Werner (though Kooij is magnificent in the rage aria here), Blažiková projects a penetrating radiance with admirable focus and impeccable tuning in "Ich wunschte mir den Tod", if without the shimmering vulnerability of Agnes Giebel or, more memorably, Elly Ameling for Helmut

Winschermann. *Süsser Trost*, with its undisputed masterpiece of an opening aria, dominates this third cantata and, again, one cannot help comparing the clear and clean but prosaic Blažiková with Ameling's peerlessly tender and personal account. Sweet consolation takes us to a different place there. Still, overall this volume is a fine addition to Suzuki's distinguished series.

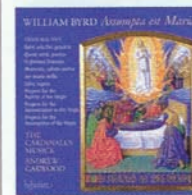
Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Byrd

'Assumpta est Maria'

Gradualia – Proper for the Nativity of the Virgin; Proper for the Annunciation of the Virgin; Proper for the Assumption of the Virgin. Quem terra, pontus, aethera. Salve regina. O gloriosa Domina. Memento, salutis auctor. Salve sola Dei genetrix. Ave maris stella
 The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood
 Hyperion ② CDA67675 (70' • DDD • T/t)

A lively addition to this impressive series from The Cardinal's Musick



In a monumental series devoted to Byrd's choral music in Latin, this is the third volume comprising motets and hymns to the Virgin. All are from the collection called *Gradualia*

published in 1605. Most are settings for five voices, the programme being varied by the inclusion of some for three, which, as Andrew Carwood remarks in his introductory notes, are "intimate examples of chamber music", reminding us of their likely purpose, serving a small domestic community of Roman Catholics living in what were for them still insecure times. Carwood also points out that the manner of these compositions suggests that Byrd had found contentment, and is in contrast to the mood of those earlier pieces (see Vol 11, 4/09) which lament the persecution, identifying (for instance) with the plight of Rachel weeping for her children. The motets in the present volume are further enlivened by the inclusion of Alleluia, proper only for Easter but finding in this way a deserved place in the complete edition.

Most striking in their sustained vigour are the two motets for the Annunciation to the Virgin, *Vultum tuum* and *Diffusa est gratia*. The happy spirit and concentrated invention of the first are capped by a particularly joyous Alleluia, and the second takes unexpected flight in triple time as it tells how the virgins will be led to the King's temple. Others (*Gaudeamus omnes* a prime example) rejoice in syncopation. Often the Amens come as a final enfolding grace. Some of the three-part hymns are masterly in their

IN THE
STUDIO

technical assurance, setting the voices free to wander and with the lightest touch recalling them to the fold for a cadence. Try *Memento*, *salutis auctor*: exquisitely wrought.

To the singers and their director is due an additional hymn of praise, though I have to say that my first impression here was of faces turned downwards and not at all expressive of the cheerful text: very hard to sound happy with voices ironed out as is generally deemed necessary to lose all trace of their natural vibrancy. Later the impression is somewhat dispelled. For that and all else, much gratitude.

John Steane

Copratio

Songs of Mourning. Funeral Teares.

The Masque of Squires. Fantasies pour viole.

Les Jardins de Courtoisie; Ensemble Céladon

Zig-Zag Territoires © ZZT090 302 (60' • DDD)

Music for royal occasions by a member of the court of Charles I



John Copratio, though rarely mentioned in the same breath as his English contemporaries Byrd, Gibbons and Dowland, was a well respected composer and valued

member of the retinue of the future Charles I. His intimacy with the royal family no doubt accounts for the emotional honesty of the *Songs of Mourning*, composed on the death in 1612 of Charles's older brother Prince Henry and addressed respectively to his father King James I, his mother, brother Charles, sister Elizabeth, friend Frederick of the Rhine, "most disconsolate Great Britain" and finally "the World". With words by Campion, they reveal a composer whose skill in vocal melody, contrapuntal integrity and soulful melancholy not only represent much that was noble in early 17th-century English music but also touch the heart with their expressive truth; listening to these songs, even now, it is hard not to feel sorrow for this young man's untimely passing.

They are combined here with Copratio's other memorial set, *Funeral Teares* of 1606, composed on the death of another public figure, Charles Blount, Earl of Devonshire, and whose words (possibly by Copratio himself) include "In darknesse let me dwell", later raised to greater heights by Dowland. To cheer things up there is also a short sequence of dances and songs from *The Masque of Squires*, got up for the happier occasion of the marriage of Lady Elizabeth.

The combined voices, viols, lute and harp of two French ensembles perform these songs with loving care, using darkly covered "old" English pronunciation and paying attention to the music's declamatory side. But if there's a natural fragility to the singing which adds something to ▶

Mouriz's Spain

Spanish-born mezzo-soprano Clara Mouriz's debut album pays homage to her cultural roots, with a selection of songs from Spain and Portugal. Recorded in May this year at Champs Hill, West Sussex, the Sonimage disc is released in November and features piano accompaniment by regular duo partner John Middleton. Works included on the disc are Turina's *Poema en forma de canciones*, Falla's *Siete canciones populares españolas*, Granados's *La maja dolorosa*, Montsalvatge's *Cinco canciones negras*, Mompou's pastoral *Llueve sobre et río*, and Halffter's *Canciones portuguesas*.

Stotijn Songs

Mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn follows her January 2009 recording of Tchaikovsky Romances with a disc of Schumann and Shostakovich for Onyx. Featuring pianist Joseph Breini and due for release in January 2010, the album includes Shostakovich's *Marina Tsvetaeva Songs*, and Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op 39 (Eichendorff) and *Andersen Songs*, Op 40. Stotijn's Tchaikovsky disc was awarded a Gramophone Editor's Choice and praised by Patrick O'Connor for its demonstration of a "full-blooded mezzo" voice, which was "steady and true (3/09).

Enchanted Wanderer

The Mariinsky label releases its fourth recording in December – Rodion Shchedrin's *The Enchanted Wanderer* featuring, once again, the Mariinsky Soloists, Orchestra and Chorus under conductor Valery Gergiev. Conceived solely for the concert stage, the 90-minute work was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered in December 2002.



Marek Janowski:
helping Henze



Henze's choral masterpiece in a vivid new recording from some old friends

Henze

Symphony No 9

Berlin Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra / Marek Janowski
Wergo © WER6722-2 (53' • DDD)

Selected comparison:

Berlin Rad Chor, BPO, Metzmacher (6/98) (EMI) 556513-2

This is not the Berlin Radio Choir's first outing in Henze's Ninth Symphony; they gave the world premiere in 1997 alongside the Berlin Philharmonic under Ingo Metzmacher and it is their pioneering account that was captured on EMI's rival version. Unlike Beethoven's Ninth, this really is a choral symphony, with the chorus employed throughout, no soloists to divert attention from the main body and relatively few passages where the orchestra carries the weight of the musical or expressive argument alone. Indeed, chorus and orchestra fuse into a single super-instrumental body, the voices functioning like another section.

Comparing the two versions, there has certainly been no diminution of the chorus's powers over the past decade. Indeed, in this new recording their tone and range seems, if anything, more refined and attuned to Henze's searing textures. In Janowski's hands the textures overall are less edgy than on Metzmacher's rival – given a more spacious, reverberant acoustic by the EMI engineers, although both versions were set down in the Berlin Philharmonie – and likewise the orchestral textures, which at times have greater suavity and beauty of tone. In such a work, of course, with its connection to the Holocaust and Anna Seghers's novel *The Seventh Cross*, beauty of tone may seem of low priority but if nothing else Henze is a communicator and all his scores are designed to be heard. Darmstadt-style indifference to his audience is anathema to him. Perhaps the soaring string melody in the fifth span, *The Plunge*, has a touch more intensity in Metzmacher's hands, but Janowski's horns in the finale more than compensate.

In short, then, this is a worthy rival to EMI's disc, competitive in all respects. In terms of sound and acoustic, I prefer Wergo's warmer, more natural product. Highly recommended.

Guy Rickards

the music's effect, there are times too when it would have to be described more frankly as technically shaky.

Lindsay Kemp

Handel

Alexander's Feast, HWV75.

Ode for St Cecilia's Day, HWV76

Simone Kermes sop Virgil Hartinger ten Konstantin

Wolff bass Cologne Chamber Choir; Collegium

Cartusianum / Peter Neumann

Carus Ⓢ ② CARUS83 424 (135' • DDD)

Alexander's Feast – selected comparison:

Sixteen, Christophers (9/05) (CORO) COR16028

Ode for St Cecilia's Day – selected comparisons:

English Concert, Pinnock (1/87) (ARCH) 474 549-2ABL

King's Consort, King (A/04) (HYPE) CDA67463

Do Handel's two Cecilian odes sit well together in a single programme?



This is the first original coupling of Handel's two St Cecilia odes on disc. *Alexander's Feast* (1736) is performed in its

1739 version, for which occasion Handel set the shorter *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* as an additional third part. Each is adorable, but hearing them programmed together made me wonder if they are best enjoyed separately. Dryden's literary concepts in the two odes are deceptively subtle and do not complement each other successfully when both are forced into a single makeshift whole. However, it is fascinating to hear a reconstruction of Handel's 1739 programme (albeit without any of the concertos that the composer inserted during and between the parts of the odes).

Collegium Cartusianum play with suppleness, unforced strength in extrovert numbers and sensitivity in quieter and more lyrical moments (eg the recorders in "Thus long ago"). Cellist Juris Teichmanis provides a smoulderingly erotic obbligato to "Softly sweet in Lydian measures", whereas "Bacchus, ever fair and young" has surprisingly robust horns (other performances tend to aim for pastoral wit rather than the bucolic splendour conjured here). Simone Kermes's melancholic delivery of the pitiful "He chose a mournful muse" is breathtaking; during "War, he sung is toil and trouble" her discomfort with the pronunciation of "bubble" will be forgotten in the wake of her grandstand cadenza (it's a bit overwrought for my taste). The Cologne Chamber Choir is excellent: the voices in the opening phrase of "The list'ning crowd" seem to float effortlessly, dynamics and phrasing are meticulous in "The many rend the skies", "Break his bands of sleep asunder" is sensational and the falling cadences evoking "heav'nly harmony" are beautifully balanced during the

first chorus of the shorter ode. Harry Christophers's gorgeous recording of *Alexander's Feast* (the complete 1736 version including concertos) and the charming versions of the *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* by Trevor Pinnock and Robert King remain the best accounts; but Neumann offers plenty for us to enjoy.

David Vickers

G Jackson

O sacrum convivium. Lux mortuorum. Salve regina. Salve regina 2. To Morning. Song (I gaze upon you). Cecilia Virgo. Orbis patrat optime. Ave Maria. Hymn to the Trinity. Honor, virtus et potestas. Not No Faceless Angel Polyphony / Stephen Layton

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67708 (76' • DDD)

Contemporary choral works of a special beauty and appeal



There are many striking features of this ravishing disc, beautifully and imaginatively performed by Stephen Layton and Polyphony. One is immediately aware of

various stylistic resonances – from the musical maelstrom of the 20th century but also from many centuries past. There are hints here and there of Monteverdi, Stravinsky, Poulenc perhaps, yet I sense Jackson's profound affinity with English choral music from the time of the Eton Choirbook to the present. There are undoubted allusions to Wylkynson, Browne and other Eton composers in the stylish "reconstituted" polyphony of *Orbis patrat optime* together with an instinctive feeling for sonority and a craving for a velvet richness in the spacing and "purring" of extended diatonic combinations in *Salve regina 2* (a truly stunning work) and the 12-part *Cecilia Virgo*. These, after all, have been the materials common to Tallis, Byrd, SS Wesley and the agnostic tradition of Parry, Vaughan Williams, Howells, Britten and so onwards to Jackson himself. Yet these works transcend any simple notion of eclecticism in the new ways that sonority and harmony are reinterpreted. I was particularly struck by the numinous strains of the *Ave Maria*, the evocative atmosphere of *Hymn to the Trinity*, the short, more limpid five-part Blake setting *To Morning* and the rapturous world of *Not No Faceless Angel* which, to me, seemed to invoke another English tradition – the partsong – but with a refreshing new inventiveness.

Shaped by his Anglican background as a chorister, Jackson possesses, not surprisingly, an instinct for acoustic and vocal texture, but the beauty and sheer appeal of his vocal works, challenging as they are, are sculpted by an energising pragmatism open both to the professional and ambitious amateur choir.

Jeremy Dibble

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Klaus Florian Vogt ten Christian Gerhaher bar
Montreal Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano
Sony Classical Ⓢ 88697 50821-2 (61' • DDD)

Selected comparison:

VPO, Boulez (4/01) (DG) 469 526-2GH

Not enough vocal contrast in this admirably restrained recording



Speaking in purely vocal terms, my taste in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* is plainly heterosexual. I realise this sentiment runs counter to the baritone quotient in

recent recordings. Nor is it a hard-and-fast rule, since I do pick up Fischer-Dieskau's performance with Bernstein with some regularity. But there's something in this music – besides its subtitle, a "symphony for tenor, contralto (or baritone) and orchestra", where a second male is clearly parenthetical – that seems to call for a woman. Mahler didn't focus very clearly on the Chinese roots of his literary sources (Hans Bethge's translations, in fact, sound a lot more like Bethge's own poetry than the T'ang Dynasty originals) but one thing that did carry into the composer's late-Romantic sensibility is the contrast between yin and yang. Not that two male soloists can't create a unified world out of Mahler's vast musical and emotional contrasts, they just have to work harder.

The problem here is precisely that lack of contrast. Tenor Klaus Florian Vogt in particular is subtle to a fault, clear and precise at the top and rather baritone in his depths. But at no

'Not since Boulez's recording in Vienna have I heard such transparency recorded with such utter clarity'

point do we find the drunken abandon called for in the yang-laden text of "Das Trinklied". Christian Gerhaher offers much more both in timbral contrast and clear articulation. Less mannered than Thomas Hampson (whose recent San Francisco Symphony recording makes an obvious comparison), Gerhaher injects only enough of himself to anchor the proceedings. The final movement, at nearly 30 minutes, is an admirable display of interpretative restraint but hardly an "Abschied" for the ages.

This is a pity, since the symphonic half of Mahler's song-symphony is in extremely capable hands. Not since Boulez's recording in Vienna, in fact, have I heard such transparency recorded with such utter clarity. Interpretatively,

though, Nagano is far more reserved, mostly steering his Montreal forces towards quiet, unsentimental contemplation. Where Boulez, ever conscious of musical structure, leads his forces with one eye clearly on the destination, Nagano keeps his attention focused on the journey.

Ken Smith

Mendelssohn

Songs and Duets, Vol 4

Lieder, Op 8 – No 7, Maienlied^d; No 8, Andres Maienlied (Hexenlied)^b; No 11, Im Grünen^b. Four Songs^d – Der Tag; Reiterlied; Abschied; Der Bettler. Frühlingsglaube, Op 9 No 8^b. Der Verlassene^c. Seltsam, Mutter, geht es mir^c. Der Wasserfall^b. Glosse 'Mitleidsworte, Trostesgründe'^c. Am Seegestad^{te}. Durch Fichten am Hügel^a. Ich denke dein, wenn durch den Hain^c. Tanzt dem schönen Mai entgegen^c. Faunenklage^c. Abschied, 'Es wehn die Wolken über Meer'^c. Hüt du dich^a. Die Nachtigall^a. Gruss, 'O könnt ich zu dir fliegen'^d. Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass?^b. Rausche leise, grünes Dach^b. Erinnerung^a. Reiselied^c.

^aHannah Morrison, ^bKatherine Broderick *sops*

^cAnna Grevelius *mez* ^dFinnur Bjarnason *ten*

^eStephan Loges *bar* Eugene Asti *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67739 (67' • DDD • T/T)

Mendelssohn's neglected youthful songs find sincere advocacy here



With its promised sequel, this fourth volume is an important extension of the Mendelssohn Song Edition, which may have been thought completed with Vol 3. Eugene Asti, the pianist and leading spirit in the whole enterprise, has tracked down 46 previously unpublished songs and offers them here for the first time on records. As Susan Youens, writer of the authoritative booklet-notes, remarks, it is extraordinary that so many works of a major composer could lie unknown for some 150 years; and as Asti himself sees it, it is symptomatic of posterity's attitude to Mendelssohn, who has been "misunderstood, underrated and under-appreciated".

The songs are nearly all early, many of them dating from the 1820s with Mendelssohn (born in 1809) still in his teens. They are strong in ideas and wonderfully assured in their handling of the words and the medium. Youens makes a good case for regarding the Vier Lieder (1830) as a cycle. Some call for immediate rehearing ("Faunenklage", for instance, and the tenderly melodious "Ich denke dein"). None deserves its former oblivion.

There is a wise and wide distribution among five singers, though it would have been better if one of the two sopranos had warmer tones, less bright and spiky. I find Katherine Broderick too often shallow in timbre and shrill when she adds volume and the music adds height. Anna Grevelius sings with pleasing evenness and more evident care for words. To ▶

DISC OF THE MONTH



EDITOR'S
CHOICE
GRAMOPHONE
THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

Intriguing, illuminating and important offcuts from Britten's workbench

Britten

'Unknown Britten'

In memoriam Dennis Brain^{ac}. Les illuminations^{be}. Movements for a Clarinet Concerto (ed C Matthews)^{ce}. Rondo concertante^{de}. Untitled Fragment for Strings^e. Variations^d

^bSandrine Piau *sop* ^cMichael Collins *cl*

^aMichael Thompson, ^aRichard Watkins, ^aPeter

Francomb, ^aChris Griffiths *bns* ^dRolf Hind *pf*

^eNorthern Sinfonia / Thomas Zehetmair

NMC © NMCD140 (78' • DDD)

The eight (!) previously unrecorded works presented on this disc span the length of Britten's career. Two come from 1930, when he was 16 and newly enrolled at the Royal College of Music: a three-minute sliver of a piece for string orchestra and two unfinished yet far more substantive movements of a *Rondo concertante* for piano and strings (the latter's loose ends have been handsomely sewn up by Colin Matthews). Both fragments are finely textured, harmonically adventurous and assured, and full of striking ideas.

Les illuminations (1939-40) is quite well known, of course. But here, in addition to the song-cycle, we have three songs (in Matthews's orchestration) discarded from the published version. "Phrase" is extremely brief and has a prefatory, recitative-like character. In the exquisitely evocative "Aube", however, Britten magically illustrates one of Rimbaud's ecstatic visions; why he thought this song to be disposable is beyond me. An intense, almost Mahlerian sense of yearning makes "A une raison" engrossing, too.

Britten began writing a Clarinet Concerto for Benny Goodman in 1941, during his final months in the US. The first movement was complete (in short score) when he returned to the UK in 1942 but the project was abandoned. Matthews has orchestrated this rhythmically playful piece as well as the 1941 *Mazurka elegiaca* (originally for two pianos), and filled out the sketches for another unfinished work from this same period to create three "Movements for a Clarinet Concerto". It's an attractive and sturdy score that brings to light some marvellous music. Indeed, the wave-like passages in the first



Thomas Zehetmair:
revealing Britten

movement (beginning around 3'00") presage *Peter Grimes*.

Matthews has also masterfully realised *In memoriam Dennis Brain* (1958), an anguished, angry and affecting work for four horns and strings. Since Brain, who was killed in a car crash, played a crucial role in the creation of the

'Throughout, Thomas Zehetmair elicits razor-sharp, sensitively shaped playing from the Northern Sinfonia'

Serenade (1943), Britten freely quotes the "Lyke-Wake Dirge", the darkest song from that song-cycle. And, finally – for solo piano – an unfinished set of theme and variations intended for the 1966 Leeds Competition. Improvisatory, ruminative (note the use of repeated notes) and exploratory in its use of extended tonality, it is a small but significant cobblestone in the path towards Britten's late style.

All the performances are superb. Sandrine Piau's stylish and imaginative interpretation of *Les illuminations* is one of the best soprano versions on disc, in fact. Michael Collins's easy virtuosity in the Clarinet Concerto is a joy. And throughout, Thomas Zehetmair elicits razor-sharp, sensitively shaped playing from the Northern Sinfonia. In short, this is one of the most important Britten recordings in many a year. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

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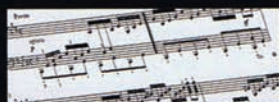
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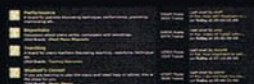
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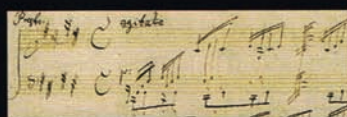
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the young Icelandic tenor Finnur Bjarnason falls the new-found "cycle", resourcefully sung. And Stephan Loges satisfies most consistently with his understanding, beauty of tone and care for *legato*. Asti is the admirable pianist throughout and in two of the items is responsible for the completion of songs left unfinished.

John Steane

Monteverdi

'Sweet Torment'

Madrigals, Book 5 – Questi vaghi concetti; T'amo mia vita; Book 6 – Ohimè, il bel viso; Zefiro torna; Book 7 – Ohimè, dov'è il mio ben?; Book 8 – Gira il nemico insidioso; Hor ch'el ciel e la terra. Scherzi musicali – Zefiro torna. Si dolce è'l tormento. Il ballo delle ingrate

I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0760 (79' • DDD)

A detailed Ballo delle ingrate lifts this madrigal recital above the crowd



I Fagiolini's previous Monteverdi offerings have been warmly welcomed, preserving something of the ensemble's memorable live performances. Given their spirited enactment of the

more cerebral "middle-period" madrigals, one naturally expects them to make the most of the overt drama of Books 7 and 8, from which most of this instalment is drawn. Lest I appear unduly critical, it should be pointed out that I Fagiolini

'The touches of interpretative tomfoolery are well taken, for it's a rather silly piece'

have chosen some of Monteverdi's most famous and often-recorded pieces, in which the memory lingers over unforgettable interpretations; in such company, they struggle sometimes to impose their own distinctive stamp on proceedings. Compare their *Zefiro torna* from Book 6 with Concerto Italiano's, for example, or the opening of *Hor ch'el ciel e la terra* with Concerto Vocale's, and you'll hear what I mean. The opening *Questi vaghi concetti* is a tough piece to get right: even the most distinguished ensembles seem unconsciously cowed by its historic momentousness. Here too, it lacks that steely sense of urgent, collective utterance that is surely its point.

Matters improve markedly with *Gira il nemico insidioso*, which is taken at a less manic pace than usual. The touches of interpretative tomfoolery there are well taken, for it's a rather silly piece. But most successful, to my mind, is the *Ballo delle ingrate*, one of the most coherent accounts of it I can remember, with a sharply delineated Pluto. The variety of continuo ►

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Carmina Chamber Choir:
singing Iceland's past



A remarkable repertory presented with flair and flawless musicianship

'Melodia'

A collection of songs from the Melodia Manuscript, 1660

Carmina Chamber Choir; ensemble /

Árni Heimir Ingólfsson

Smekkleysa © SMK56 (67' • DDD)

Although the early literature of Iceland stands proudly at the root of European civilisation, the country's early music is far harder to find. *Melodia* is the title of a handwritten collection from around 1660 containing over 200 songs with Icelandic texts; but what has become clear from recent research is not just that much of the music was several hundred years old at the time of copying but that some of it comes from sources of the European mainland – works from around 1500 by Senfl and Hofhaimer, for example, as well as, most astonishingly of all, the duet *Laudemus Virginem* known otherwise only from the late-14th-century Catalan collection known as *Llibre Vermell*. The repertory ranges from love songs and drinking songs to standard liturgical material.

This anthology of music from the Melodia manuscript is almost entirely the work of Árni Heimir Ingólfsson, who founded the excellent Carmina Chamber Choir (among whose soloists I could particularly commend the marvellously clean voices of Kirstín Erna Blöndal and Marta Guðrún Halldórsdóttir), arranged the music (generally with considerable tact and judgement), conducted and wrote the explanatory notes. Four of the songs are provided with lute accompaniment, four with keyboard accompaniment, and one with a consort of viols. Otherwise the singing is unaccompanied, though often fleshed out into polyphony according to mainland sources. All the Icelandic texts are presented with English translations. And the entire collection is a triumph.

David Fallows

INTERVIEW

Árni Heimir
Ingólfsson

The music is from a 17th-century songbook, written in Iceland but preserved in Copenhagen. I look at this particular manuscript as a kind of 17th-century iPod, because it's music from all over the place, of all kinds of different types and characters, most of it sacred, but also some of it secular, which is unique – there's no other manuscript source from this time in Iceland that transmits secular music.

As far as we know it's an anonymous scribe just putting down on paper all of his favourite songs in a booklet he can carry around and take wherever he goes.

So it's a fabulous way of understanding what kind of music was being sung and performed during that time, and getting a feel for the taste of a person who obviously knew a lot of music and made his own selection of his favourites. If he wasn't a traveller himself – which he may well have been – he was certainly very well connected and highly educated in order to have been able to pull all these threads together into that one manuscript. It's been suggested that he either studied at, or was maybe even a teacher at, one of the Latin schools in Iceland which were the centres of learning at the time.

The music in the manuscript covers a huge range – some of it is quite new, but a lot of it is actually archaic. You've got Gregorian chant, you've got a very primitive-sounding organ, and then some late-16th-century polyphonic bits. It's very varied – lots of fun to put together.

Most of the music is monophonic but there are also polyphonic sections, and then we decided for some of the pieces to add our own instrumental accompaniment. That's more about using our imagination and seeing if we can open the window and find out what things might have sounded like, rather than explicitly just following exactly what's in the manuscript.

Interview by
Martin Cullingford



instruments is highly effective, and the work's dramatic line holds until the final, valedictory exhortation.

Fabrice Fitch

Monteverdi

'Scherzi Musicali'

Scherzi musicali – Ecco di dolci raggi; Eri già tutta mia; Et è pur dunque vero; Maledetto sia l'aspetto; Quel sguardo sdegnosetto. Lamento d'Arianna. Madrigals, Book 7 – Con che soavità. Ohimè ch'io cado. Si dolce è'l tormento. Voglio di vita uscir. Più lieto il guardo. La mia turca. Perché se m'odiavi
Emanuela Galli sop La Venexiana /
Claudio Cavina

Glossa © GCD920915 (55' • DDD)

Monteverdi's songs sensuously served up by La Venexiana



Monteverdi's two collections of songs entitled *Scherzi musicali* ("musical jokes") were published in 1607 and 1632. Rather than presenting the complete 1632 set (as is implied by Glossa's attractive artwork), La Venexiana instead places just five songs from the latter volume in the centre of music taken from the *Settimo Libro dei Madrigali* (1619), the *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze* (published by Milanuzzi, 1624) and the *Arie di diversi raccolte* (published by Vincenti, 1634), and the song "Voglio di vita uscir" (edited from a manuscript in Naples). Claudio Cavina takes a flexible approach to what he calls Monteverdi's "light" music, professing in the booklet note that he "wanted to have a joke with music... The *pizzicati* from the

'Cavina's "joke" never condescends into the realms of cocktail lounge jazz-lite'

theorbo and the harp, the melodic lines of the cornetto, the swing of the voice... we present a *divertissement* for performers and listeners alike."

The results of La Venexiana's experiment is no less imaginative than L'Arpeggiata's recent fantasy loosely based on Monteverdi (Virgin), but is far subtler; Cavina's "joke" never condescends into the realms of cocktail lounge jazz-lite, but instead remains closely connected to the composer's *chiaroscuro* spirit. If there is humour here, it is of a dry type. Emanuela Galli's playful rendition of "Ohimè ch'io cado" has a *pizzicato* basso continuo part, but also possesses tangible sincerity (whereas L'Arpeggiata's performance, featuring Philippe Jaroussky, is more like camped-up crossover). Galli's breathy opening phrase of "Con que soavità" is exquisitely erotic, even if

Glossa's recorded sound becomes uncharacteristically hard when the instrumental ensemble plays (the large continuo group includes three lutes, triple harp and harpsichord). "Si dolce è il tormento" and "Et è pur dunque vero" both feature the effective combination of Doron David Sherwin's sensitive cornetto playing and Galli's emotive singing. The recital concludes with Cavina's new orchestration of the lament from the lost opera *Arianna* (1608); a sensuous string ensemble gives eloquent support to Galli, whose singing ideally conveys impassioned lamentation without becoming distorted. **David Vickers**

Mozart

Mass No 17, 'Coronation', K317^a. Exsultate, jubilate, K165^b. Vesperae solennes de confessore, K339^c. Ave verum corpus, K618^d

abc Dorothée Mields sop ac Mélanie Forgeron mez
ac Christoph Wittmann ten ac Martin Berner bass
ac Vocapella Choir; Aachen Symphony Orchestra /
Marcus Bosch

Coviello Classics © COV30607 (63' • DDD)

Recorded live at Aachen Cathedral and the Stadtkirche, Giengen/Brenz, in March 2006

Quick smart performances of some of Mozart's most popular choral works



Marcus Bosch, the city of Aachen's Generalmusikdirektor, favours brisk tempi in two concerted choral works from the final year or so of Mozart's Salzburg church employment. String ensemble is generally solid, and wind and especially brass instruments are dapper and well spotted. Dorothée Mields is radiant, and while none of her solo colleagues are in the same league, they combine as a mellifluous quartet. The problem is the chorus. They're well drilled and supremely integrated into the orchestral texture – integrated to such an extent, in fact, that they are denied their central role in this music, becoming little more than another colour in the accompaniment. The Vespers are fine as far as they go; the Mass isn't likely to prompt a radical reappraisal of my chosen recordings in *The Gramophone Collection* (11/06).

Mields is again centre stage in a useful *Exsultate, jubilate*, although some may prefer the "whiter" sound of a singer such as Emma Kirkby, given that the motet was composed expressly for a castrato – one Venziano Rauzzini, who ended his days in Bath. The Vocapella Choir finally come into their own in the late *Ave verum corpus*, yet another reading that ignores Mozart's two-in-a-bar instruction and delivers it in a sluggish four. I'm not sure who this disc is for, outside the mums and dads of the choir. There's certainly nothing here to frighten the horses.

David Thresher

Schumann

Belsatzar, Op 57. Vier Gesänge, Op 142 – No 2, Lehn deine Wang; No 4, Mein Wagen rollet langsam. Liederkreis, Op 24. Myrthen, Op 25. Abends am Strand, Op 45 No 3. Romanzen und Balladen II, Op 49 – No 1, Die beiden Grenadiere; No 2, Die feindlichen Brüder. Romanzen und Balladen III, Op 53 – No 3, Der arme Peter I; No 4, Der arme Peter II; No 5, Der arme Peter III. Tragödie, Op 64 No 3. Fünf Lieder und Gesänge, Op 127 – No 2, Dein Angesicht; No 3, Es leuchtet meine Liebe

Florian Boesch bar Malcolm Martineau pf
Onyx Classics © ONYX4041 (60' • DDD)

Selected comparison:

Finley, Drake (11/08) (HYPE) CDA67676

Leiderkreis – selected comparison:

Maltman, Johnson (5/01) (HYPE) CDJ33105

Gura, Schultz (1/03) (HARM) HMC901766

Boesch's incisive baritone impresses, but does he have enough flexibility?



One of an impressive crop of thirty-something German Lieder singers, Florian Boesch fields a strong, incisive baritone, with a wide palette of colours and a ringing

top register. He is at his considerable best in outgoing songs, the side of Schumann represented by Florestan in the composer's

'There is much to enjoy in Boesch's dramatic, intensely "lived" performances'

twin fictional personas: snarling and sneering at the dawdling hours in "Es treibt mich hin" from the Heine *Liederkreis*, or railing against his faithless lover, and by extension all womankind, in "Warte, wilder Schifffmann" – one of the few songs where Schumann matches Heine's taunting bitterness. Boesch excels, too, in the mingled bravado and mordancy of "Die beiden Grenadiere", and is a graphic story-teller in the ballads "Die feindlichen Brüder", "Es leuchtet meine Liebe" (his sonorous low notes an asset here) and "Belsatzar", the latter given a chilling performance, with Belshazzar's death recounted in stunned, hollow tones.

Reservations creep in when the composer is in introspective, Eusebius mode. Boesch's "yawning" tone is effective enough in the opening song of the *Liederkreis*, "Morgens steh' ich auf und frage". But Schumann's dreamy inwardness too easily provokes a breathy, whispered quarter-voice, as in "Ich wandelte unter den Bäumen" and the final verse of "Schöne Wiege meiner Leiden". Similarly, in two of Schumann's most exquisite love songs, "Du bist wie eine

Blume" and "Die Lotosblume", other baritones – most recently Gerald Finley – have caught the mood of hushed, confiding tenderness without starving their tone of its natural resonance in the name of characterisation. These songs, and the sweet-sinister "Dein Angesicht" – one of four discards from *Dichterliebe* included here – also expose the baritone's tendency to swell on individual notes rather than cultivate a true, bound *legato*.

There is much to enjoy in Boesch's dramatic, intensely "lived" performances, and in the imaginative playing of Malcolm Martineau (ultra-sensitive in Schumann's secretive piano postludes). Recorded balance between singer and pianist is well judged. But for more consistently satisfying singing per se, allied to equally vivid characterisation, I would turn to Finley and, in the Heine *Liederkreis*, Christopher Maltman or, among tenors, Werner Güra.

Richard Wigmore

B Tchaikovsky

Four Josef Brodsky Poems^a. Two Mikhail Lermontov Poems^a. Lyrics of Pushkin^a. From Kipling^b. Trio^c. Two Pieces for balalaika and piano^d

^aOlga Filonova sop ^bSvetlana Nikolayeva mez ^cAlexey Khutoriansky vn ^dLev Serov va

^eMarina Archakova vc ^dKirill Ershov bala

^{ad}Olga Solovieva pf

Toccata Classics © TOCC0046 (65' • DDD)

The expressive music of a composer emerging from his namesake's shadow



Boris Tchaikovsky, who was born in 1925 and died in 1996, did not live through easy times in Russia, so perhaps it is not surprising that the most substantial work in this collection is the cycle of eight Pushkin songs centring on the artist's responsibility to his talent. He has the song-writer's essential gift of being able to light upon a musical gesture that is flexible to the poem's shifting imagery or expression, and the best of these songs are moving – none more so than the seventh, about the artist's ambivalent feelings on completing and so parting from a well loved piece of work. Elsewhere, the emotions are sometimes veiled. Not for nothing was he a student of Shostakovich. His String Trio, written in 1955, has a cool, enigmatic *Andante* that gradually intensifies into something more mysterious, and for a finale an *Allegretto* of a kind of nervous playfulness that inevitably recalls his teacher.

There is again a nervous tension in the cycle of settings by Josef Brodsky, sometimes a bleak simplicity that is never merely banal. These are skilful and interesting songs, and they would make their effect better with a soprano of a stronger voice and clearer articulation: she is too often covered by the

piano in this recording. The Lermontov settings, written when the composer was only 15, are more traditional; this Tchaikovsky had not yet found his way out of the influence of the older Tchaikovsky (to whom he was not related). There are two oddities. One consists of a pair of Kipling settings for mezzo and viola, rather freely translated but responding to a poet the Anglophile composer understood and admired; and a bright couple of pieces which take the balalaika as capable of more than folksy janglings.

John Warrack

Vivaldi

'New Discoveries'

Argippo, RV697 – Se lento^a. Se fide quanto belle, RV749^a. Motet, 'Vos invito'. Flute Sonata, RV806^b. Violin Sonatas^c – RV798; RV810. Concerto for Oboe, Cello and Strings^d. Concerto for Multiple Instruments, RV578^a

^aRomina Basso mez ^dPaolo Pollastri ob

^cEnrico Casazza vn ^dBettina Hoffmann vc

Modo Antiquo /

Federico Maria Sardelli ^brec

Opus 111 © OP30480 (68' • DDD)

Brilliantly researched, performed and recorded – this disc does Vivaldi proud



Naïve's anthology of "New Discoveries" is supervised by Federico Maria Sardelli, an accomplished recorder-player and also a musicologist at the heart of Vivaldi studies (he takes centre stage in the sonata for "flauto dritto", RV806, which he discovered in Berlin). He explains that this disc is "like a basket of seasonal fruits" because it is the result of the last 18 months or so of Vivaldi research. These are not merely first recordings; most pieces are receiving their premiere performances of any kind in modern times.

Sardelli's band Modo Antiquo deliver turbulent music with vigorous refinement and successfully convey the fizzy excitement and fantasy of Vivaldi's writing, while never sacrificing resonance or stylistic sincerity (other conductors of Naïve's Vivaldi Edition could benefit from taking note!). They wring out the maximum quota of drama in the *Adagio e spiccato* that opens RV578^a (found in Dresden, and seemingly an earlier version of the second concerto of *L'estro armonico*). An oboe concerto (without RV number) has a beautiful *Largo* that features sensitive contributions from soloist Paolo Pollastri in dialogue with bassoonist François De Ridder. "Se lento ancora il fulmine" is a dynamic *tour de force* that Vivaldi seems to have written in the early 1730s for his lost Prague opera *Argippo* (the aria was discovered in Regensburg); it is magnificently sung by Romina Basso, whose masterful technique, clear delivery of text and expression of vocal phrases is

also showcased in the motet *Vos invito, barbarae faces* (RV811; discovered in the library of the Basilica of S Francesco in Assisi). Michael Talbot calls this the "most imposing of the new works" in his excellent booklet-note and speculates that it might have been an early composition for Padua. Basso's ornamentation is spellbinding here, and also in "Se fide quanto belle" (an aria rediscovered in the Abbey of Montecassino).

David Vickers

'Henry's Music'

Anonymous King's Pavan. England be Glad. Madame d'amours. Hec est preclarum **Benedictus de Opiitis** Sub tuum presidium **Fayrfax** Lauda vivi alpha et oo **Henry VIII** Consorts – VIII; XII; XIII. O My Heart. Tandernaken. Helas madame. Though some saith. Adieu madame. En vray amour **Jacotin** Beati omnes **Sampson** Salve radix. Psallite felices. Quam pulcra est **Taverner** O Christe Jesu, pastor bone **Verdelot** Nil majus superi vident

Andrew Lawrence King *bp*

Alamire; Quintessential /

David Skinner

Obsidian © CD705 (76' • DDD)

A nicely rounded view of the court of Henry VIII in his anniversary year



Alamire's recent survey of Verdelot madrigals already had a Henrician connection. Here the king takes centre stage, at least in his younger incarnation, pre-Reformation, well before Holbein's impressive but lowering portrayal. This disc consists of pieces composed in his honour by both English and continental composers, and a generous selection of consort pieces and songs by Henry himself. With the exception

'There's little to be said for Henry's slight, short-winded compositions, which over-use a few stock phrases'

of the much-recorded *Tandernaken* and the pleasant *Adieu madame*, there's little to be said for Henry's slight, short-winded compositions, which overuse a few stock phrases, some of them familiar from *Pastime with good company* (which isn't included here). One does wonder how he got through the two Masses he's reported to have written.

The occasional pieces written for him are a mixed bag: Taverner's *O Christe Jesu*, albeit originally in honour of Cardinal Wolsey, is the best of them, followed by *Psallite felice* by Sampson (whose canonic curiosity *Salve radix* is also worth hearing).

At nearly 17 minutes, *Lauda vivi alpha et oo* dwarfs the rest, but it's a rather sprawling affair,



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not Fayrfax's best. The choral contributions, aided by a lucid acoustic, are secure and solid, particularly the Sampson and Taverner pieces, with the solo numbers slightly less convincing. It might also be noted that *Lauda vivi* sounds surprisingly restrained.

But the inclusion of Andrew Lawrence-King's harp is a deft bit of programming; I'd gladly have heard more of it, and the young wind quintet Quintessential are similarly entertaining. Altogether it's a pleasing panorama of the optimistic, extrovert mood of the English court and its young ruler, before it all changed...

Fabrice Fitch

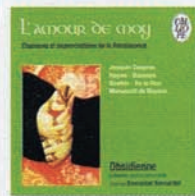
'L'amour de moy si est enclose'

Bofrin Et trop penser **Busnoys** Joye me fuit. Mon mignault musequin **Compère** Mais que che fut secrètement. Le Renvoy **De la Rue** Autant en emporte le vent. Puisque Robin j'ay a nom. Entre Petronne et Saint Quentin. Véc'y le mai. Quand je voy renouveler. On doit bien aymier l'oyselet. Joye me fuit et douleur me queurt seure. Je ne pourroy plus celer. Helas Oliver Vasselín. Mon mignault musequin. Pourquoi non. Dieu la gard la bergerotte. Amy je prends conge de vous. Kyrie improvise sur Amy je prends conge de vous. Fors seulement Pipelare. **Heyne** Ce n'est pas jeu **Josquin des Pres** Plaine de dueil

Obsidienne

Calliope © CAL9408 (65' • DDD)

A recital built on monophonic tunes, in which instruments outshine voices



The so-called Bayeux manuscript, copied at the turn of the 16th century, preserves a repertory of songs that was often mined for new compositions. Here,

some of those originals are performed alongside their polyphonic settings, and some are allowed to stand on their own. The members of

'Obsidienne's members both sing and play, but they sound more compelling and proficient on their instruments'

Obsidienne sometimes improvise sung counterpoints against them, as was often done. Though the results are mixed, it's the only way for listeners to engage with a practice that's by definition irrecoverable: the pair of improvised *Kyries* attempted here are certainly most impressive, the second especially so. Some of the songs, though not found in Bayeux, are not otherwise available on CD at present, so this project helps fill several gaps in the discography. Further, the monophonic songs often are extremely catchy.

The discographical and musical interest overrides the reservations one has concerning

the performances themselves. Obsidienne's members both sing and play, but they sound more compelling and proficient on their instruments. With one or two exceptions, individual voices lack distinctiveness (tenors strain audibly at the top of their range, for example in Compère's *Mais que ce fut*), and the quality of the choral ensemble is more reminiscent of a highly accomplished French chorale than of polished professionals (as in La Rue's *Pourquoy non*). I realise that sounds damning but it's not meant to be, for there's real enjoyment to be had from these performances. One simply feels that a couple more voices of substance would enable the ensemble better to meet its considerable aspirations.

Fabrice Fitch

'La Magdalene'

The cult of Mary Magdalene in the early 16th century **Agricola** Gaudeamus omnes in Domino

Anonymous O waerde mont. Maugré danger pompera Magdalene. Se j'ayme mon amy. Tous nobles cueurs **Blondeau** Basses dances – La Magdalena **Champion** Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena **Sermisy** Jouissance vous donneray

Graindelavoix / Björn Schmelzer

Glossa © GCDP32104 (77' • DDD • T/t)

Listening pleasure? Not really, but this disc is still worth hearing



The choral director Peter Phillips has proposed that if it were possible to hear 15th-century singers, the results might strike us as ugly. A number of groups, of which Graindelavoix is the latest, have appeared to test that hypothesis. Their house style is strongly reminiscent of Marcel Pérès's Ensemble Organum in their "Corsican monks" period, in which the vocal timbres have the pungency of the cheeses of that island. That's to say that listeners who regard the sound of early polyphony as synonymous with the English choral tradition will find this hard going. While I'd hardly put myself in that category, I confess that my own notions of what is bearable, let alone beautiful, are sometimes put to the test here. Suffice it to say that one singer in particular has me pining for the dulcet whinge of Liam Gallagher...well, almost.

Critics of this approach might object that the recording is more about defending an aesthetic position than a piece of music or a composer. That said, this strikes me as Graindelavoix's most convincing recording to date. Its centrepiece is a Mass by Nicolas Champion. How good a composer was he? Good enough for one of his works to have been attributed to Josquin by a well informed 16th-century theorist. It's very fine music, and the ensemble's coherence of vision (particularly as regards extemporised polyphony and

ornamentation) is impressive. Anyone interested in the performance practice of early polyphonies should listen to this, for the questions posed by Graindelavoix are worth asking, even though their answers are unlikely to please everyone.

Fabrice Fitch

'L'écrit du cri'

Anonymous Chanson nouvelle de tous les cris de Paris **Bouchot** Les cris de Paris **Campo** Les cris de Marseille **Deransart** Les cris de la rue **Ducol** Le cri **Janequin** Les cris de Paris **Kastner** Les cris de Paris **Lebeau** Les cloches du monastère **Ledoux** Cri de blog **Roland** Le cri du Bagnérais **Scotto** Le cri du poilu **Servin** La fricassée des cris de Paris **Ensemble Clément Janequin / Dominique Visse** *counterpart* **Harmonia Mundi** © HMC90 2028 (74' • DDD • T/t)

A new venture for one of today's most enterprising vocal ensembles



It was with "The Cry" – or rather, "The Cries", specifically those of Paris – that the Ensemble Clément Janequin introduced itself to modern audiences over

30 years ago. In this fascinating recital they explore the term's many meanings, with a mixture of works ranging from Janequin (whose *Cries of Paris* are here revisited) to several contemporary composers, some of who take the concept into more visceral, disturbing directions. In many ways this is a new departure for Dominique Visse's troupe. More surprising than the inclusion of contemporary works, perhaps, is that of 19th- and early-20th-century pieces in expertly judged arrangements by Visse himself, which allow us to peep into the world of the fairground and the music hall, with strong hints of Offenbach, among others. Though not all of it is necessarily great music, the charm of this recital is that of hearing a familiar instrument (I mean the ensemble) being taken in completely new direction, and showing every sign of enjoying itself immensely.

The notion of "cry" is taken into cyberspace (in Claude Ledoux's *Cri de Blog*) and, more grimly, into torture-chambers in Bruno Ducol's *Le cri*, which manages not to trivialise its subject and mostly steers a challenging course between formal balance and vital theatrical utterance. The most ambitious of the modern pieces, it shows off Visse's astonishing vocal flexibility and capacity for lyricism and dramatic characterisation. Not all of the contemporary pieces have such a grim outlook, and the ensemble's other members are heard more often than usual in their own right. Fans of the Ensemble will find plenty to ponder.

Fabrice Fitch



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E&OE

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Musica Secreta:
magical music
for Ferrara



A novel approach to
this music for women's
voices spanning
Christmas to Easter



'Sacred Hearts + Secret Music'

Anonymous Cantabunt sancti canticum novum. Beata Agnes in medio flammarum. Amo Christum, in cuius thalamum introivi. Agnes, Beatae Virginis. Sequenza in onore di Sant'Agnese. Stans Beata Agnes in medio flammarum **Palestrina** Missa Veni sponsa Christi. Motets, Book 3 – Surge illuminare Jerusalem. Alma redemptoris mater. Lamentationum Hieremiae liber tertius – Holy Saturday: Lectio I-III **Rore** I sacri et santi salmi di David Profeta – Magnificat a 6 toni. Regina caeli laetare.

Musica Secreta; Celestial Sirens /
Deborah Roberts, Laurie Stras

Divine Art © DDA25077 (80' • DDD)

This is billed as a soundtrack: not to a film, but to *Sacred Hearts*, a novel by Sarah Dunant. The book – which I haven't read – is set in a Benedictine convent in Ferrara in 1570. The music, which is a mixture of plainchant and polyphony, follows the span of the novel from Christmas to Easter.

The question of who sang the tenor and bass parts of the music that Vivaldi composed for the girls of the Ospedale della Pietà has been aired recently in *Vivaldi's Women*, a television documentary that deserves a wider circulation on DVD. The programme showed that it was possible for women to sing the lower parts at pitch. In their booklet-note, Laurie Stras and

Deborah Roberts propose different solutions: first, to transpose those parts up an octave where necessary, with continuo instruments preserving the written bass. This works well in the Palestrina Mass, but the octave doublings in

'The Mass sounds both natural and beautiful; indeed the whole piece is an aural feast'

Rore's *Magnificat* sound strange and unconvincing to my ears. Much better is the second solution, followed in *Surge illuminare* and the *Lamentations*: here the bass is taken only by the continuo. Stras and Roberts also advocate the ornamentation of solo lines. They apply this to the Mass, where it sounds both natural and beautiful; indeed the whole piece is an aural feast.

The plainchant is sung by permutations of the Sacred Hearts Schola – essentially Musica Secreta without the instruments – and Celestial Sirens, a fine amateur choir. The last item is Rore's *Regina caeli laetare*, Frances Kelly's harp weaving round the soprano line. Magical.

Richard Lawrence

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Bellini

Norma

Beverly Sills *sop* Norma
Shirley Verrett *mez* Adalgisa
Enrico di Giuseppe *ten* Pollione
Paul Plishka *bass* Oroveso
Delia Wallis *mez* Clotilde
Robert Tear *ten* Flavio
John Alldis Choir; New Philharmonia Orchestra / James Levine

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From Westminster originals

Some questionable casting decisions make for an abnormal Norma



This is not totally unenjoyable or entirely without distinction: it's just not right. Levine, for instance, is a great one for rallying the troops, fanning the flames and waking the sleepers but of floating "Casta diva" he shows here no more idea than a regimental bandmaster. The Pollione, American lyric tenor Enrico di Giuseppe, sounds at first as though Tonio, lover of the Regiment's daughter, has donned the wrong uniform and strayed into the wrong opera: instead of the usual vocal beefcake, here we have a bright little fellow with a good top C and nothing much in the lower half of his voice, which in this role is so particularly important. Then "Norma vien" sings the chorus, but what arrives sounds more like Marie (of the Regiment) come in pursuit of her errant lover. Later there are passages and aspects of the role to which Beverly Sills is better suited, but that underweight "Sediziose voci" immediately proclaims her to be no Norma.

With the entry of Adalgisa in the person of Shirley Verrett we have singing of a different order. The date is 1973 and the voice is fresh and strikingly beautiful. She also makes that rather arid first solo bloom as it rarely does, warming the recitative and giving heartfelt utterance to the prayer. In the duets with Norma she is not only fully competitive on the high Cs, but in "Mira, o Norma" it is her verse which makes the magical effect more often produced by Norma's. Where Sills herself shines is in moments of emotional urgency, such as the plea to Oroveso and her confession to the people. Her voice, shallow and infirm in the middle register, is suddenly pure and radiant on top, and the passagework is fine in its precision and fluency.

It's a disappointment to find that this version, like so many others, omits the beautiful "moonlight" passage after the "guerra" chorus.

Chorus and orchestra ensure that, if this proves not to be a widely respected recording, the fault will not be theirs. The sound engineers had their problems no doubt, but they seem not to have been very clever in dealing with the usually helpful acoustics of the Watford Town Hall.

John Steane

Handel

'Arie per basso'

Apollo e Dafne, HWV122 – Come rosa in su la spina. Dalla guerra amorosa, HWV102. **Agrippina** – Pur ritorno a rimirarvi; Vieni, o cara. **Alcina** – Overture; Pensa a chi geme. **Orlando** – Sorge infausta una procella. **Serse** – Me felice, ho smarrito; Del mio caro baco amabile. **Siroe, re di Persia** – Overture; Se il mio paterno amore; Gelido in ogni vena. **Tamerlano** – Amor da guerra e pace
Lorenzo Regazzo *bass* with Gemma Bertagnoli *sop*
Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini
Naïve Ⓢ OP30472 (58' • DDD)

A good concept is undermined by tepid performances and characterless singing



There have been murmurs of discontent that too many Handel aria recitals are being churned out. I'm optimistic that the format has artistic life left in it, provided that suitable singers, reliable conductors and sincere record companies use a bit of imagination and ambition. One potentially worthwhile project is an exploration of Handel's writing for the bass voice: very few such recital discs have been

'It is high time we exploded the myth that Handel's writing for bass singers was routinely dull'

attempted, and most have resorted to transpositions of popular pieces written for higher voices; also, it is high time we exploded the myth that Handel's writing for bass singers was routinely dull and merely doubled the basso continuo. The field is ripe to harvest.

So it's a pity that Lorenzo Regazzo and Concerto Italiano fail to create an adequate Handelian bass experience. The inclusion of ordinary, decent arias seems to have been dictated by the popularity of their parent works (*Tamerlano*, *Alcina* and *Serse*), but there is much finer bass music in less familiar operas.

The technical mastery of the musicians is never in doubt during these neat performances.

"Se il mio paterno amore" (*Siroe*) lacks sufficient menacing character, and in "Gelido in ogni vena" – in which Cosroe realises that he has wrongly condemned his son to death – Concerto Italiano's clipped playing lacks expressive line, and Regazzo's accomplished voice seems uninterested in reaching into the core of the intensely anguished drama. "Sorge infausta una procella" (*Orlando*) is better; the brisk accompaniment has a quizzical and philosophical tone, and Regazzo's delivery of the text is forthright (even if it doesn't come anywhere close to conveying the wisdom of the enlightened sorcerer Zoroastro). The scene from *Agrippina* in which Claudio unsuccessfully attempts to bed Poppea is unconvincing: "Pur ritorno a rimirarvi" feels as if Regazzo is singing only to the microphone, and not to Poppea (notwithstanding the presence of soprano Gemma Bertagnoli for a few lines of recitative); "Vieni, o cara" is perfunctory and lacks the requisite seductiveness. Regazzo's singing is one-dimensional: Claudio, Cosroe, Elviro and Zoroastro are different and unique dramatic characters, but here their personalities sound suspiciously identical. I'm glad to have an accomplished recording of the infrequently heard cantata *Dalla guerra amorosa*. This isn't an awful recital, but it should have been so much more.

David Vickers

Ricci

Corrado d'Altamura – highlights

Dimitra Theodossiou *sop* Delizia
Dmitry Korchak *ten* Roggero
James Westman *ten* Corrado
Ann Taylor *mez* Guiscardo Bonello
Andrew Foster-Williams *bar* Giffredo
Cora Burggraaf *sop* Margarita
Camilla Roberts *sop* Isabella
Mark Wilde *ten* Il Marchese Albarosa di Navarra; A Knight

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir;
Philharmonia Orchestra / Roland Böer
Opera Rara Ⓢ ORR246 (79' • DDD • S/T/t/N)

A forerunner to La forza del destino that is well worth considering



Jeremy Commons suggests that the opera should have been named after the heroine, Delizia d'Altamura, rather than her father Corrado. It might still better have been called *La forza del destino* causing Verdi and Piae to think again about a title for their new opera 21 years later. The last acts of both operas

take a very similar turn: against his will, the tenor-lover has killed the soprano's father in a duel which he does his best to avoid, ending up with his seeking forgiveness from her in a convent. There appears to be no musical kinship (to judge, at least, from these "highlights"), but certainly the dramatic affinity is notable.

And Federico Ricci's score is in no way unworthy. Written in 1841, three years after *Il prigioniero d'Edimburgo*, the music has its own

'Ricci's score has its own individuality – and it confers a sufficient individuality upon the characters too'

individuality – and it confers a sufficient individuality upon the characters too. My own candidate for the title-role, if poor old Corrado is to be displaced, would in fact not be Delizia but the more interesting Roggero d'Agrigento. To him falls the moment, late in the opera, when the emotions are most generously called upon, as he leads the ensemble in a melody of the kind that Verdi was to develop most movingly in the swaying lament of the great concerted finale of the second act of *La traviata*.

The tenor here is the young, clear-voiced and stylish Dmitry Korchak. Corrado is James Westman, a baritone well supplied with high A flats for his cabaletta and with a well placed voice sometimes recalling Sherrill Milnes. But much interest will centre on the appearance of Dimitra Theodossiou in the Opera Rara schedule. This is the kind of role which might in former years have gone to Nelly Miricioiu, who would have sung with broader, warmer tones, though Theodossiou (best known on records for her Norma) has a comparably strong dramatic instinct. Here the voice is well contrasted with the lighter soprano of Cora Burggraaf who plays Margarita, the "other woman", and with Ann Taylor as the other admirer, with whom she has an attractive duet. Good work by orchestra and chorus under Roland Böer, who shows a sure feeling for the style. The opera, last heard in 1870, was spotted by the late Patric Schmid, to whom this premiere recording is dedicated.

John Steane

Cheryl Barker

'Great Operatic Arias, Vol 21'

Boito Mephistopheles – To the moonlit waves they cast him **Catalani** La Wally – I'll float into the distance **Cilea** Adriana Lecouvreur – See now, I am exhausted... I am the humble servant of God's immortal art; Poor little flowers **Heggie** The End of the Affair – Nineteen Forty-four, March, May, June **Leoncavallo** Pagliacci – His eyes were flashing with anger; Through the air they soar; My fate is in your hands... Then will you say why you have enslaved me^b

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Renée Fleming's performances are generous and true throughout



Renée Fleming's verismo adventure demonstrates the value of variety



Renée Fleming

'Verismo'

Catalani La Wally – Ne mai dunque avrò pace?... Ohime! **Cilea** Gloria – O mia cuna **Giordano** Fedora – Tutto tramonta^a. Siberia – Nel suo amore. **Leoncavallo** La bohème^b – Musette svara sulla bocca viva; Mimì Pinson la biondina. Zazà – Angioletto il tuo nome?^c **Mascagni** Iris – Un di (ero piccina). Lodoletta – Ah il suo nome... Flammen perdonami **Puccini** Suor Angelica – Senza mamma. La bohème – Sì, mi chiamano Mimì; Addio... Donde lieta. Manon Lescaut – Sola perduta abbandonata. Turandot – Tu che di gel cinta^d. La Rondine^e – Ore dolci e divine; Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso **Zandonai** Conchita – Ier della fabbrica
Renée Fleming sop with ^{bc}Saito Kaoru, ^{ac}Emma Latis, ^{dc}Barbara Vignudelli sop ^bAnnalisa Dessi, ^cLucia Mincaroni mezz ^{bc}Paolo Cauteruccio, ^{ad}Arturo Chacón-Cruz, ^eJonas Kaufmann tens ^bGilles Armani, ^bCarlos Gomez bars ^{bd}Marco Calabrese bass Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, Milan / Marco Armiliato
Decca © 478 1533DH (72' • DDD)

There are still those who shrink from operas of the *verismo* school as they might from a huddle of knife-carrying hoodies. And, of course, in giving assurance that here we have only the tender face of *verismo* one risks scaring them off as from an orgy of sentimentality. Perhaps we shall have to give it up as a lost cause, but that would be a pity for here is a recital which might prove acceptable even to the most resolute of the anti-*verismo* brigade. It is all heart, but not worn too shamelessly on the sleeve. This singer knows restraint, and the value of variety too, as

the heart, heavy-laden in one aria, is lightened in the next.

Renée Fleming, or her advisers, have chosen well. They seek out pieces from the lyric repertoire and avoid the more violent emotions. Not that Fleming's voice lacks the warmth and darker tones that often carry a deeper human appeal (the chest tones come movingly into play as Mimì, with noble control of her feelings, makes her simple arrangements in the Farewell). And there are times – Manon Lescaut's cries of protest at death's imminence – when the Italian tradition does expect a more forcefully vibrant tone and a more painfully raw show of emotion. But the feeling throughout is generous and true. Characterisation (as with the childlike heroines of Mascagni) infuses the voice without being applied like make-up. And the inclusion of some unexpected charmers – the solos from Leoncavallo's *Bohème* have the lilt of good operetta – is most welcome.

Care has been taken to supply other solo voices when these are part of the score, and indeed, in the final number we have the luxury "extra" of Jonas Kaufmann's rich tenor to lead the bewitching ensemble from *La Rondine*: the balance of the parts is not ideal but the piece remains irresistible, and it's good, after all the sighs and tears, to come out rejoicing.

John Steane

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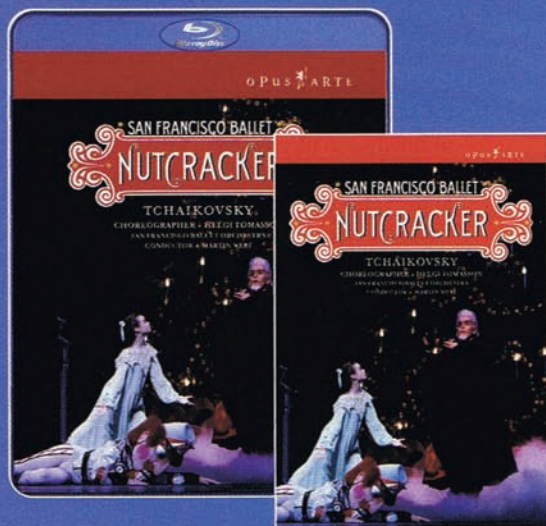


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R Strauss *Arabella* – He's not the one who's right for me... The one who's right for me; I'm very glad, Mandryka ^b **Tchaikovsky** *The Queen of Spades* – You need not close the windows just yet... Oh why am I so tearful!; It's nearly midnight now **Williamson** *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* – How can I explain to you

Cheryl Barker sop with
^a **Gillian Keith** sop ^b **William Dazeley** bar
 London Philharmonic Orchestra /
 David Parry
 Chandos © CHAN3161 (68' • DDD)

The lyric soprano showcased in this latest volume of opera arias in English



So, the series has come of age. Twenty-one volumes, which means (taking the present programme of 12 as average) about 250 items. Mind, they can't all be "great" and, for

that matter, not all of them are arias. Still, they have done well, presenting a good company of singers, each able to represent a particular type of voice and so to cover a wide operatic repertoire, arranged usefully and (as far as I know) uniquely on records by this system of vocal categories.

The new volume illustrates the lyric soprano often in relatively dramatic moments, mostly from 19th-century operas with some incursions into the 20th. The two "modern" operas, Malcolm Williamson's *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* and Jake Heggie's *The End of the Affair*, are lyrical in style and welcome both in

'Cheryl Barker is always clean in her placing of notes and clear in her articulation of the English words'

themselves and for their unexpectedness. We note that arias which might have been paired – the two from *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Arabella* and *The Queen of Spades* – are programmed separately, which might annoy the tidy-minded but doesn't greatly upset me.

Cheryl Barker is always clean in her placing of notes and clear in her articulation of the English words. She is ready with a trill, has an ample supply of high notes and (in the *Mefistofele* aria, for example) reinforces the lower register effectively; sometimes (as in the opening of the *Arabella*-Mandryka duet) she sings quite beautifully. Her associates have some additional qualities. Gillian Keith's light soprano appears pure in tone and evenly produced, and William Dazeley (surely one of our best baritones) has an attractive timbre, heard pleasingly throughout. David Parry's speeds tend to be a little too slow for my liking but the orchestral playing is refined and responsive.

John Steane

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jonas Kaufmann: the most sought-after tenor of his generation



Kaufmann's power and artistry are undeniable in this impressive release



Jonas Kaufmann

Beethoven *Fidelio* – Gott! welch Dunkel hier!
Mozart *Die Zauberflöte* – Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön; Die Weisheitslehre dieser Knaben... Wie stark ist nicht dein Zauberton! ^b **Schubert** *Fierrabras* – Was quälst du mich, O Missgeschick!... In tiefbewegter Brust. **Alfonso** und *Estrella* – Schon, wenn es beginnt zu tagen **Wagner** *Lohengrin* – In fernem Land; Mein lieber Schwan! *Die Walküre* – Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond. *Parsifal* – Amfortas!... Die Wunde!; Nur eine Waffe taugt
Jonas Kaufmann ten with ^a **Margarete Joswig** mez ^b **Michael Volle** bass-bar ^c **Valdis Jansons** bass **Teatro Regio** Choir, Parma; **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** / **Claudio Abbado**

Decca © 478 1463DH (69' • DDD)

It should no longer come as a surprise, but however many times one has heard and admired Jonas Kaufmann, the size of his voice can seem astonishing whenever one returns to listen again. Though he opens his new disc quietly, in the rapt voice required for "In fernem Land", his tenor is immediately very striking for its body and well supported control. *Lohengrin* – *bel canto* Wagner, as it were – is the most recent role Kaufmann has taken on in the theatre (he added it to his gallery of characters this summer in Munich), and his sense of story-telling here shows how he already inhabits the part.

Indeed, the weight of his voice is reminiscent more of a young Jon Vickers than Kaufmann's acknowledged idol, Fritz Wunderlich. In his "Bildnis" aria, the first of two from *Die Zauberflöte* featured here, there is less of that Wunderlich-like sweetness of tone by which

most Taminos are measured, and it's possible that Kaufmann will be outgrowing this role soon.

Celebrated for his versatility, the German tenor has been successful in key roles of the French and Italian repertory, but here he shows a special affinity for works in his native tongue. The German Romantic theme is set already on the CD cover, where he is portrayed as Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer*. And that quintessential German Romantic work, *Fidelio*, is the centrepiece of this disc: it receives a powerful performance from both tenor (his opening "Gott" is heart-piercing) and conductor. It's good news that Kaufmann is to record Florestan on Claudio Abbado's new recording of Beethoven's masterpiece.

Abbado has long been a champion of Schubert's operas, and his accompaniments with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra here are especially rewarding – not least in the wind-writing in *Alfonso und Estrella*. Kaufmann has also sung the title-role in *Fierrabras* widely, and it suits both the tenor's power and his strong sense of musical line.

Kaufmann ends where he began, with Wagner. *Parsifal* (Lohengrin's father) was his first Wagner role, and Siegmund is still, wisely, some way off into the future. But his beautiful phrasing and controlled singing in the "Winterstürme" shows why he has become the most sought-after tenor of his generation, and is a highlight of this exciting new release.

John Allison

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Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2010



Juan Bautista Otero
directs a magnificent
performance of *Artaserse*



EDITOR'S
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Terradellas

'Furor!'

Sesostri re d'Egitto – Sinfonia; Solitudini amene; Spiega omai le placid'ali; Qual sventura e la mia; Se perde l'usignolo; Fra l'ombre del timore; Tremate, sì, tremate, mostri di crudeltà. **Merope** – Dono d'amica sorte non cura il mio valore; Dove si vide mai di me più sventurata. Ah scellerato!... Un empio m'accusa; Sinfonia.

Artaserse – Per quel paterno amplesso. L'onda dal mar divisa – Que tragico spettacolo; Cantata als Dolors de Maria Santissima

Maria Grazia Schiavo *sop* Dolce & Tempesta / Stefano Demicheli

Fuga Libera © FUG551 (66' • DDD • T/t)

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Terradellas

Artaserse

Anna Maria Panzarella *sop* Artaserse

Céline Ricci *sop* Arbace

Marina Comparato *mez* Mandane

Sunhae Im *sop* Semira

Augustín Prunell-Friend *ten* Artabano

Mariví Blasco *sop* Megabise

La Real Compañía Ópera de Cámara /

Juan Bautista Otero

RCOC Records © 3 RCOC0800-3

(175' • DDD • S/T/N)

Domingo Terradellas (1711-51) was Catalan by birth but moved to Italy in 1732, and studied with the celebrated master Francesco Durante at the

conservatory Poveri di Gesù Cristo in Naples. His first major operatic triumph was *Merope* (Rome, 1743); a Neapolitan envoy wrote of its success, "the like of which no one can remember for many years". Terradellas worked mainly in Rome, but his setting of Metastasio's *Artaserse* was performed at Venice in 1744. A year later, Terradellas went to London, where he composed for the King's Theatre. By 1750 Terradellas was back in Italy, and his last opera *Sesostri* was a huge hit at the Rome Carnival in 1751. Highly esteemed and innovative (Burney claimed that he pioneered the use of woodwind instruments in accompanied recitative), he was embroiled in a bitter rivalry with Nicolò Jommelli – although the legend that Jommelli had a hand in Terradellas's body being dumped in the Tiber has been discredited. Two new recordings provide an opportunity for us to assess whether Terradellas's music merits resurrection.

Dolce & Tempesta, directed by harpsichordist Stefano Demicheli, kicks off its programme with a finely contrasted sinfonia from *Sesostri*; the spirited outer movements flank a graceful *Larghetto*. "Dono d'amica sorte" (*Merope*) confirms that Terradellas's style is essentially that of the Neapolitan school – it has the hallmarks of throbbing basso continuo quavers, rushing violins,

'Mariví Blasco delivers ornamentation in "Allor che irato freme" that manages to be both stratospheric and tasteful'

punctuating horn blasts and fiendishly difficult vocal acrobatics (expertly navigated by Neapolitan soprano Maria Grazia Schiavo). In vigorous music Dolce & Tempesta sounds a little unbalanced – as if the violins are compensating for their fewness in number by playing more furiously or intensely than the music strictly demands (or perhaps in competition with the projections of the horns, oboes or trumpets). However, the performances are routinely excellent, and the softer items featuring flutes are beautifully judged. The programme is intelligently designed to accentuate the vivid contrasts and variety in Terradellas's writing, and he emerges as a fully-fledged operatic master. Schiavo's singing is first-class, especially in the intensely raging soliloquy "Un empio m'accusa" (*Merope*) and her heroic grandstand finish ("Tremate, sì, tremate, mostri di crudeltà" from *Sesostri*). I would like to hear this repertoire played by a slightly bigger orchestra possessing a richer string tone, and with a shade more elegance in faster arias, but "Furor!" is an ideal introduction to the composer.

Those wanting to sample Terradellas's music in an undiluted context might enjoy Juan Bautista Otero's accomplished performance of *Artaserse*,

recorded in Barcelona last year. Despite the booklet containing a scholarly essay in English that discusses the quality of dramatic characterisation in the opera at some length, the libretto is printed only in Italian, Spanish and French. This makes a close study of Metastasio's text very difficult for German- or English-speaking listeners, which is a shame because this is a classy performance of a fascinating opera (at least the detailed English synopsis contains cues to the arias). Those who find Hasse, pre-reform Gluck or even early Mozart impenetrable and dulled by *da capo* conventions won't be easily dissuaded from that opinion, but others – including those who admire Metastasio's tense political dramas – will enthuse that Terradellas's setting is varied, imaginative, melodically assured and dramatically astute. It is true that the plot is complicated, but the best thrillers always are. There are irresistible moments of dramatic tension, such as Arbace's intense "Fra cento affanni e cento", as he reels in shock that his father has murdered the king (the deed which ignites the ensuing drama, as Arbace is torn between filial and political senses of duty).

La Real Compañía Ópera de Cámara plays with energy and refinement; the string section is just big enough to bring the varied sonorities to proceedings; warmly illustrative woodwind and confident brass-playing feature in numerous arias. All of the singers are fully immersed in the dramatic action, and most of them dispatch astonishing arias to good effect. In the two leading male roles, Anna Maria Panzarella and Céline Ricci are both totally committed to their characters (the perplexed heir to the throne Artaserse, and the unjustly accused Arbace). The closing part of Act 1, during which Arbace is disowned or rejected by everyone else (in superb short arias), concludes with him led to prison as he boldly declares the heroic "Quando freme altera l'onda" (with two splendid trumpets fully to the fore). At the conclusion to Act 2, Arbace's father Artabano (the real murderer) envisages being accused by the ghost of his innocent son in a vivid accompanied recitative and aria ("Ombre, o dei perchè tornate?", feverishly sung by tenor Augustín Prunell-Friend). Sunhae Im aptly conveys the anguished predicaments of Semira, the daughter of the murderer, brother of the accused, but also lover of the victim's son and heir; her sweetly sung "Torna innocente" and "L'augellin ch'è in lacci stretto" are spellbinding. Mariví Blasco delivers ornamentation in "Allor che irato freme" that manages to be both stratospheric and tasteful. In such scenes there is little doubt of Terradellas's great talent as a musical dramatist. Nowadays our appreciation of serious operas performed in Italy during the first half of the 18th century is embarrassingly narrow, but this magnificent recording goes some way towards showing how the imbalance can be redressed.

David Vickers

DVD

A Sting in Schumann's tale • Metzmacher's Messiaen • Analysing Anderszewski

DVD OF THE MONTH

EDITOR'S
CHOICE
GRAMOPHONE
THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

Messiaen

Saint François d'Assise

Rodney Gilfry *bar*..... Saint François
 Camilla Tilling *sop*..... L'Ange
 Hubert Delamoye *ten*..... Le Lépreux
 Henk Neven *bass*..... Frère Léon
 Thomas Randle *ten*..... Frère Massée
 Donald Kaasch *ten*..... Frère Élie
 Armand Arapian *bar*..... Frère Bernard
 Jan Willem Baljet *bar*..... Frère Sylvestre
 André Morsch *bass*..... Frère Rufin
 Chorus of De Nederlandse Opera; The Hague
 Philharmonic Orchestra / Ingo Metzmacher

Stage director Pierre Audi
 Video director Misjel Vermeiren

Opus Arte ⑤ ③ DVD OA1007D (4h 35' • NTSC •
 16:9 • PCM stereo and DTS 5.0 • 0)

Recorded live at Het Muziektheater, Amsterdam, in
 May & June, 2008

A faithful and intelligent production
of Messiaen's magisterial masterpiece

Sandro Carli's first production of *Saint François*, at the Paris Opéra, is still singular in its faithful recreation of Messiaen's stage directions, but only when Peter Sellars staged it for

Salzburg in 1992 did the opera begin to win a wider following. What Pierre Audi's production catches is a solemnity that does not stand on ceremony. The music and text of *Saint François* may not move fast but they are always going somewhere – one of many ways in which the piece has a Wagnerian heritage, filtered through the score of *Pelléas*, which Messiaen loved enough to memorise in full.

Set in the smaller but still adequate confines of Amsterdam's Musiektheater, Audi's production thoroughly vindicates what may have been a practical decision to accommodate the vast

'He inspires his cohorts to greater feats of stamina and virtuosity than any other conductor before in the opera'

orchestra at the back of the stage, with most of the action on an apron projecting into the stalls, not least by the brilliance of what we hear (thanks also to some superbly balanced engineering). Ingo Metzmacher is typically faithful to Messiaen's markings – a little faster in stretches of the long "Sermon to the birds" – but he animates lines, clarifies chords and inspires his cohorts to greater feats of stamina and

virtuosity than any conductor before him in the opera.

Rodney Gilfry holds the stage as the Saint more by his acting than his singing, which is tireless without effacing memories of José van Dam or David Wilson-Johnson in the role, and the occasional gruffness betrays the chest infection he was carrying early in the run. It's too bad that the film wasn't made from later performances, but perhaps the producers were mindful of Camilla Tilling's condition: an obviously pregnant Angel might give rise to unwelcome distraction. In any case she sustains her lines with no obvious strain, swathed in the same robes as the Brothers, who all rise to the challenge of filling out their rather starkly defined characters. Hubert Delamoye's Leper is painfully affecting both to watch and hear. The chorus may be smaller than Messiaen's impractical demands but it is well drilled and deployed with great intelligence.

It would be nice but probably futile to think that this set will provoke a further and more positive consideration of the opera in the UK, where its three concert performances (and still no staging!) since Messiaen's death in 1992 have received standing ovations from half-empty houses: preaching to the converted. At least the rest of the world can now sit up and watch as well as listen. **Peter Quantrill**

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Norma Fantini *sop* Vera Smirnova *contr* Francesco
 Meli *ten* Rafal Siwek *bass* Maggio Musicale Chorus,
 Florence; Symphonica Toscanini /
 Lorin Maazel

Medici Arts ⑤ ③ DVD 207 2438 (96' • NTSC • 16:9 •
 PCM stereo, 5.1 and DTS 5.1 • 0)

Recorded live at the Basilica di San Marco, Venice,
 on November 16, 2007

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Sharon Sweet *sop* Dolara Zajick *mez* Luciano
 Pavarotti *ten* Paul Plishka *bass* World Festival Choir;
 Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra /
 Lorin Maazel

Domovideo ⑤ ③ DVD DMM517
 (96' • NTSC • 4:3 • PCM stereo and 5.1 • 0)

Recorded live at the Arena di Verona in August
 1990

Starkly contrasting performances –
one distinctly outshining the other

The St Mark's film begins with holiday shots of Venice, Verdi's *Sanctus* playing mistily in the background. Night falls and an elderly



gentleman approaches the basilica looking for all the world like the Grim Reaper. Buffed and burnished for the cameras, he reappears in the basilica itself, where with calm command he leads a measured, occasionally brilliant, sometimes moving performance of the Requiem.

Lorin Maazel came to Toscanini's attention at the age of 11 and to De Sabata's at 23. This Venice performance,

staged to mark the 50th anniversary of Toscanini's death, is closer to De Sabata than to Toscanini, especially in the opening *Requiem aeternam* (6'30" to the tenor's entry as opposed to Toscanini's 4'30"). So long-drawn a meditation floors the video director, who randomly switches images every few seconds in defiance of the musical line. Things settle when the soloists appear, but the glorious setting continues to be unimaginatively used.

Maazel has chosen as soloists theatre singers on the cusp of international eminence – an embryonic *Don Carlo* cast, you might say (the Polish bass Rafal Siwek is especially fine). The Florentine chorus is first-rate, as is the recently founded and privately funded Symphonica Toscanini, of which Maazel is music director. Despite a slightly distant choral sound in the *Sanctus*, the recording is generally good.

The poorly recorded and indifferently filmed August 1990 Verona performance, with its 3000-strong World Festival Choir, and Maazel the limber ringmaster, was convened to mark the 45th anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb. Alas, the sight of serried ranks of performers in an ancient arena has an ominous 1930s feel to it. It is also astonishing how little sound 3000 voices make in the night air.

The soloists include a bespectacled Pavarotti peering nervously at his vocal score while singing with doubt-defying eloquence – a sad contrast to the wonder of his younger and lesser-known self singing under Karajan on Henri-Georges Clouzot's celebrated 1967 film of the Requiem (DG, 1/06). Clips of both are available on YouTube.

The cover reveals that there was "a 24 mins [sic] great applause from 20,000 spectators at the presence of Lady Diana". Stay to the bitter end and you will glimpse the lady heading for the exit. That's probably on YouTube as well.

Richard Osborne

Xenakis

Xenakis Edition, Vol 10 – Complete String Quartets
JACK Quartet (Christopher Otto, Ari Streisfeld *vns*
John Pickford Richards *va* Kevin McFarland *vc*)

Mode © **MODE209**

(53' • NTSC • 16:9 • 5.1 • 0)

Compelling, confident performances of Xenakis's music for string quartet



A DVD with less than an hour's music and no additional features might seem a missed opportunity, for which even an excellent booklet essay is insufficient compensation. But discs which feature this kind of contemporary

repertory are so rare that the enterprise of Mode Records must still be highly commended. Xenakis's music for string quartet provides an enthralling demonstration of a radical thinker in sound engaging with a medium whose traditions and conventions he takes great delight in subverting – though never in an entirely negative spirit. And the ways in which these four compositions progress from the explosive avant-gardisms of *ST-4/1*, *080262* to the austere ritualised gestures of *Ergma* – the title means “finished work” – is striking testimony to Xenakis's increasingly sophisticated rethinking, over more than 30 years, of the modal roots of Greek folk music, together with distant echos of the earlier modernist giant Stravinsky.

ST-4/1, *080262* identifies the computer-generated “stochastic”, randomly aligned elements – some very basic, others immensely elaborate – that ground the composition, together with the date on which the processing was done, on IBM-France's 7090 machine. Filming the formally dressed players in black and white nicely fixes the pioneering primitiveness of the exercise. In fact, the quartet dress differently for each piece, and the use of fairly unrelenting close-ups on individuals risks overloading the images associated with complexity when a cooler, more detached visual impression might aid aural comprehension. From this angle, the performances of *Tetora* and *Ergma* are the most effective, the mixing in of shots of the musical score in the former adding to the rather mannered artificiality of the experience. The sound in itself is admirably vivid, the performances immensely confident. **Arnold Whittall**

Piotr Anderszewski

‘Unquiet Traveller’

A film by Bruno Monsiegeon

Piotr Anderszewski *pf* with Dorota Anderszewska
vn Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Bremen;

Philharmonia Orchestra / Gustavo Dudamel

Medici Arts © **MODE 307 7938**

(83' • NTSC • 16:9 • 2.0 • 0)

Inside the mind of one of the most individual musicians of our time

Suitably subtitled “Unquiet Traveller”, this DVD is a dazzling portrait of a pianist rapidly



acquiring cult status. For many he is the most original and charismatic pianist of his generation, and like all true artists his life is a confusion of paradoxes. For Anderszewski, talking about music is a betrayal, a form of sacrilege evoking William Blake's “Never seek to tell thy love; love which never can be told”.

Yet how he talks! Told he is an uncompromising pianist, he lives in fear of compromise, dreading concerto performances where responsibility is divided. Solo recitals are no less of a nightmare, a cruel form of exposure, recordings even more so as you strive for perfection, for an ever-elusive ideal. Of Hungarian-Polish birth, his nature veers from elation to depression, joy but also fear of the exigencies of a concert pianist's career. He speaks movingly of his greatest loves, of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Szymanowski and, most of all, Mozart. For him hearing Mozart's Requiem at the Church of the Holy Cross in his beloved Warsaw was his first great inspiration and a reminder that Warsaw was raped and murdered first by the Nazis and then by the Russians. He stares masochistically at a photo album of old Warsaw, a rich and cosmopolitan city now standardised with the Chopin Airport as an example of unspeakable vulgarity. This leads to a stream-of-consciousness response to Chopin and of how his ultra-Polish soul comes clothed in a perfectly tailored suit. For him much of the Barcarolle is sufficiently rapturous to evoke a drunken gondolier, while the Third Ballade makes you think of young girls in white waking the streets of Paris. The C sharp minor Waltz, on the other hand, is “noble”.

All this and so much more is filmed on a train as Anderszewski journeys from city to city, a born nomad now safely in the hands of his train-driver. There are superb examples of Bach (a razor-sharp Gigue from the First Partita), Mozart, Beethoven (the recording sessions for the First Concerto), Chopin, Schumann and Szymanowski, all played and described with a breathless and romantic wish to communicate at a bewildering number of different levels. Like Claudio Arrau he could well exclaim, “when I play I am in ecstasy, that is what I live for”.

Bryce Morrison

‘Twin Spirits’

Portraying the love of Robert and Clara Schumann in words and music

Sting, Trudie Styler *spkrs* Derek Jacobi *narr*

Rebecca Evans *sop* Simon Keenlyside *bar* Sergei Krylov *vn* Natalie Clein *vc* Iain Burnside, Natasha Paremiski *pf*

Devised and directed by John Caird

Opus Arte © **MODE OA0994**

(3h 28' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.0 • 0)

Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Extra features include photo gallery; cast

talk; documentary, ‘One Heart, One Soul’; Robert and Clara Schumann chronology; ‘My House’, The work of Royal Opera House Education

Robert and Clara's love explored in words and music lacks inspiration



Twin Spirits sets out to tell the oft-told story of the relationship between Robert and Clara Schumann, one of classical music's great love affairs. John Caird's entertainment, first

staged at the Royal Opera House in 2005 as a charity fund-raiser, was recorded in front of a small audience in a studio space at the ROH in December 2007. All the artists involved donated their services free, and everyone buying a copy of the DVD will be supporting the work of the Opera House's Education Programme.

Sir Derek Jacobi is the narrator; Sting and Trudie Styler (aka Mrs Sting) read from the letters between Robert and Clara; the musicians intersperse the text with music by Robert, Clara, Chopin and Mozart. Despite the best intentions of everyone, it proves an enervating experience on film. Sting's hope that it will provide “a great

‘Unlikely to inspire anyone coming anew to classical music. Indeed, it will confirm their worst fears’

introduction for people who don't normally listen to classical music” is sadly optimistic: the unrelieved solemnity of the occasion and reverential text, filmed in a matching sepulchral gloom, are unlikely to inspire anyone coming anew to classical music. Indeed, it will confirm their worst fears.

Twin Spirits might fare better on radio: no one moves at all during proceedings. Sir Derek reads his script from the depths of an upstage throne; Sting and Miss Styler – the two lovers – are sat on opposite sides of the stage and thus never physically contact one another. Sting brings his charismatic presence to the composer; vocally and facially, Miss Styler is a one-dimensional Clara. The musicians, often perversely playing arrangements of Robert's solo piano works, are dutiful rather than inspired (the exception being Keenlyside's magnificent rendering of “Ich grolle nicht”). It is all bum-numbingly somnolent.

If you really want to find out about the Schumanns, musicologist Daniel Gallagher has some interesting insights in conversation with the director and cast on disc 2. Best of all is Dr Gerd Neuhaus from the Schumann Museum in Zwickau who talks about Robert and Clara without pause for 36 minutes, though it is in German and you have to be a quick reader to scan the non-stop subtitles. “Schumann,” he stresses, “is inconceivable without Clara...one heart and one soul – they cannot be separated.” *Twin Spirits* in life but, alas, not on stage. **Jeremy Nicholas**

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

Monteux and Mengelberg

Newly unearthed radio broadcasts of two mid-century maestros

West Hill Radio Archives have been trawling Boston's broadcast legacy again, this time for their collection "Pierre Monteux: A Treasury of Concert Performances 1951-1958". Monteux provides an interesting paradox. In the studio he invariably gave cogent, clear-headed, elegant and for the most part beautifully judged performances, more often than not hitting the stylistic nail squarely on the head and providing us with recordings that are always worth returning to. Monteux "in session" was a sort of interpretative logician, whereas Monteux "live" was, or could be, a quite different animal, a risk-taker who would happily throw caution to the winds, and who would also on occasion tamper with scoring or cut sections of a score either for pragmatic or for what he considered genuinely musical reasons.

The live-versus-studio issue is particularly apparent in the three late Tchaikovsky symphonies where contemporaneous and much-respected RCA studio recordings are available for direct comparison (or at least the *Pathétique* is, at present, on a "Living Stereo" SACD). In the case of No 6, aside from some marginally slower "live" tempi, the added tension generated during the concert seems to justify Monteux's interpretative options, especially near the beginning of the work and at the climactic points in the closing *Adagio lamentoso*. The Fifth is similarly combustible, the finale including a marked *ritardando* that also crops up on the studio recording but works so much better "live", perversely because it's more extreme and therefore more convincing. The live Fourth is electrifying, the second movement crying its second subject truly from the heart, while the swift *pizzicato Scherzo* picks up the tempo further after the Trio, and the closing pages bring the house down. Monteux's *Hamlet* Overture is impulsive but cut, and so is the excitable and quirky Concert Fantasy (with a very able Vera Franceschi), whereas Monteux's Beechamesque side is nicely illustrated by a highly characterful reading of the Theme and Variations from the Fourth Orchestral Suite.

Classical core repertoire is represented by a fast and tautly played Schubert Ninth, a combination of Toscanini-style energy and Furtwänglerian freedom, a Haydn *Surprise* with a fizzing finale and a driven but subtly voiced account of Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony, the middle movements being especially fine. Tossy Spivakovsky combines eloquent expression with keenness of attack in Bartók's Second Violin Concerto, where Monteux plays on the score's rhapsodic aspect, while the impressionist haze generated by Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto (Roman Totenberg is the fine soloist) doesn't preclude a nimble approach to rhythm, especially in the work's opening pages. Prokofiev's *Classical* Symphony (a Monteux "first" on disc) and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* benefit from genuine stereo sound; there's also a *Petrushka* Suite (starting with the "Russian Dance") and works by Debussy (including a supple and provocative *Jeux*), Wagner (one of Monteux's favourite composers), Mendelssohn, Elgar (*Enigma* Variations) and d'Indy (*Istar*). John Canarina provides excellent booklet-notes and Maggi Payne's restorations are all you could wish for.




Before the Second World War, Monteux was one of Willem Mengelberg's regular guests at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Mengelberg himself is the subject of two fascinating Malibran Music double-packs devoted to late wartime French Radio broadcasts that were discovered in, of all places, a flea market! The 1944 recordings were taken down on acetate-covered aluminium Pyral discs. There are two concerts, the first from January 16 opening with a red-blooded *Anacréon* Overture followed by a relatively young Paul Tortelier projecting at white heat onto Dvořák's Concerto – a truly virtuoso account – and a reading of César Franck's Symphony that, although similar in outline to Mengelberg's Concertgebouw versions (Teldec, Philips), finds added flavour in the French Radio Orchestra's very individual sound. In the Dvořák Mengelberg is an impulsive and highly responsive accompanist, leaping at the *tutti* where others merely take their turn.

The concert of January 20 is in general better recorded and the rapport between Alfred Cortot and Mengelberg in Chopin's Second Concerto is if anything even more remarkable, Cortot varying his tone from a thunderous roar to the utmost delicacy, his quota of fluffs no more – or less – than on his 78s from the '30s. But what incandescent phrasing, and that rich, bell-like tone, better captured here than on many of his commercial discs. Generally speaking I find it a more probing, reflective performance than the 78s with Barbirolli. The French account of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* shares certain qualities with Mengelberg's two Telefunken (Teldec) Concertgebouw recordings, not least the strings' forceful attack, the very individual phrase-shaping and the equally "irregular" tempo relations. This is Mengelberg's broadest *Pathétique*, a truly tragic performance, which for all its period eccentricities (including distinctly "Old World" string slides) has genuine charisma. Generally speaking the sound is a good deal better than one might have expected, the odd snip excepted, and the double basses at the end of the work and in much of the second movement come off especially well. The concert opened with a lively *Roman Carnival* Overture. One wonders whether any other Pyral survive, especially as Mengelberg's Paris concerts from the period also included the Fourth Symphonies of Schumann and Glazunov, neither of which he recorded commercially. But these four CDs are great to be getting on with and the booklets (by Jean Farjanel) are very informative. You're also given the original radio announcements.

The Recordings

- **Various Cpsrs** Treasury of Concert Performances 1951-1958 Monteux West Hill Radio Archives (M) (B) WHRA6022
- **Cherubini. Dvořák. Franck** Orch Wks Tortelier, Mengelberg Malibran Music (M) (2) CDRG188
- **Berlioz. Chopin. Tchaikovsky** Orch Wks Cortot, Mengelberg Malibran Music (M) (2) CDRG 189



‘This is Mengelberg’s
broadest Pathétique, a truly
tragic performance’



TESTAMENT



The Trojans

Berlioz The Trojans

Blanche Thebom · Jon Vickers · Amy Shuard · Jess Walters
Rafael Kubelik

Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, June 1957



TESTAMENT

SBT4 1443 (4 CDs) *Previously unpublished*

Recorded live at the Royal Opera House,
Covent Garden, 1957

Dido	BLANCHE THEBOM mezzo-soprano
Aeneas	JON VICKERS tenor
Cassandra	AMY SHUARD soprano
Corebus	JESS WALTERS baritone
Anna	LAURIS ELMS mezzo-soprano
Narbal	DAVID KELLY bass
Panthus	MICHAEL LANGDON bass
Ascanius	JOAN CARLYLE soprano
Iopas	RICHARD VERREAU tenor
Priam	FORBES ROBINSON bass
Hecuba	NOREEN BERRY contralto
Hylas	DERMOT TROY tenor
Helenus	EDGAR EVANS tenor
Ghost of Hector	JOSEPH ROULEAU bass
Greek Captain	ROBERT ALLMAN baritone
Mercury	ALAN BEALE baritone
A Soldier/First Trojan Sentry	RONALD LEWIS baritone
Second Trojan Sentry	RHYDDERCH DAVIES baritone

Covent Garden Opera Chorus
Covent Garden Orchestra
conducted by

Rafael Kubelik



Ida Haendel · Simon Rattle

BBC

Sibelius Violin Concerto

Elgar Violin Concerto

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Recorded live



Ida Haendel & Simon Rattle
Sibelius & Elgar: Violin Concertos
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall 1993
& the Royal Festival Hall 1984
Previously unpublished
SBT 1444

Sir John Barbirolli
Mahler: Symphony No.6

New Philharmonia Orchestra

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, 1967

Previously unpublished

SBT 1451



Sir John Barbirolli

BBC

Mahler Symphony No.6

New Philharmonia Orchestra

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, August 1957



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TOSCANINI CD DEBUTS

Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart, and Alfred Hertz in San Francisco

And the month's discoveries don't end there. Pristine Classics' Andrew Rose has tracked down a 1945 live recording of Brahms's Second Piano Concerto with Horowitz and his father-in-law **Arturo Toscanini** conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra, an interpretation already enshrined on both live and commercially recorded discs. The differences?



Very little from Toscanini's standpoint, but as for Horowitz, every shifting inflection brings with it a uniquely magical effect and I'd say that this particular account of the slow movement is the best we now have from him. Elsewhere it's like hearing a prize fight transcribed into concerto terms, with rather more give from Horowitz. The sound is good if not quite "pristine"; for that you need to turn to Rose's expert transfer of a quite spectacular Toscanini account of Brahms's Second Symphony, tape-recorded at Carnegie Hall in February 1951 and originally the privileged property of members of the Toscanini Society (on LP). Those who know the commercial RCA recording from a year or so later can expect an

extra rush of adrenalin, especially in the finale which, in addition to being superbly played, also lays claim to being one of the most impassioned versions of disc. A Toscanini/NBC Beethoven



Fifth from 1944, a performance that's similar in all essentials to the two Toscanini Fiftths from '39, is worth investigating, especially for the sake of a hell-for-leather (but always controlled) finale. Toscanini made no secret of his problems with Mozart and Pristine's truthful transfer of the 1944 NBC broadcast of Symphony No 29 focuses certain limitations in the maestro's approach, notably a tendency to hurry and a disinclination to savour the phrase,



though there is some tender string-playing in the *Andante*. The coupling is more interesting, though less well recorded: a cool last Piano Concerto recorded as part of a run of debut New York performances by Rudolf Serkin. Turning to San Francisco, Pristine are usefully reissuing **Alfred Hertz's** recordings



with the city's Symphony Orchestra, Victor 78s of excellent quality. The performances have plenty of personality, especially Beethoven's *Leonore* No 3 from 1928

and a suite from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the previous year. The disc also includes music by Schubert and Weber. Mark Obert-Thorn has prepared the excellent basic transfers and the CD is billed as "Vol 1". I'm curious as to what the second volume might contain.

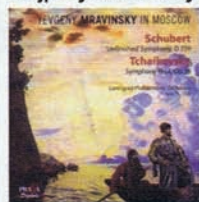
The Recordings

- **Brahms** Pf Conc No 2 Horowitz, Toscanini
Pristine (M) PASC171
- **Brahms** Sym No 2 Toscanini
Pristine (M) PASC157
- **Beethoven** Sym No 5 Toscanini
Pristine (M) PASC170
- **Mozart** Sym No 29. Pf Conc No 27 Serkin, Toscanini
Pristine (M) PASC164
- **Beethoven, Mendelssohn** Orch Wks Hertz
Pristine (M) PASC163

ESTIMABLE RUSSIANS

Perplexing Mravinsky from Praga and concertos with Oistrakh

Praga have released a fascinating CD called "Yevgeny Mravinsky in Moscow" which couples Schubert's *Unfinished* with Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, both with the Leningrad Philharmonic. The date, April 24, 1959, seemed vaguely familiar so I accessed a marvellous Mravinsky website at www32.ocn.ne.jp/~yemravinsky/discography.htm only to



find that, yes, there was a Mravinsky concert on that day and, yes, it did include those works, but with the USSR Symphony Orchestra, very much the rough cousin to the super-sleek Leningrad Phil. The USSR concert was issued on (mono) Russian Disc RDCD10 903 and, in the Tchaikovsky, sounds much as you'd expect, Mravinsky pushing a game but unrefined bunch of players to their limits. Interesting too that

according to my researches there are no Russian-originated issued stereo recordings of Mravinsky and his orchestra prior to 1961 (this Praga disc definitely is in stereo) and I'm wondering whether somewhere along the line there's been an inadvertent mix-up of source materials. Performance-wise, this particular Fourth sounds uncannily like the legendary DG stereo recording but then the "uncanniness" could be in Mravinsky's consistency. The Schubert also isn't from the Moscow USSR concert, at least not if the Russian disc is what it says it is! I remain perplexed, especially as Praga have previously released some of my most prized historical CDs including a stunning Mravinsky account of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* and a superb set of David Oistrakh recordings.

And it's **David Oistrakh** I close with this month, a ravishing 1957 recording of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the



USSR Symphony under Kyrill Kondrashin, as tonally seductive an account as you're ever likely to hear, perfectly poised in every detail and phrased with the

utmost musical intelligence. The couplings are Tchaikovsky's *Sérénade mélancolique* (1945), and another unforgettable concerto recording, the Glazunov this time, again under Kondrashin, from 1948. If ever an Oistrakh CD were to be selected to circle the earth for posterity, this should be it! (C)

The Recordings

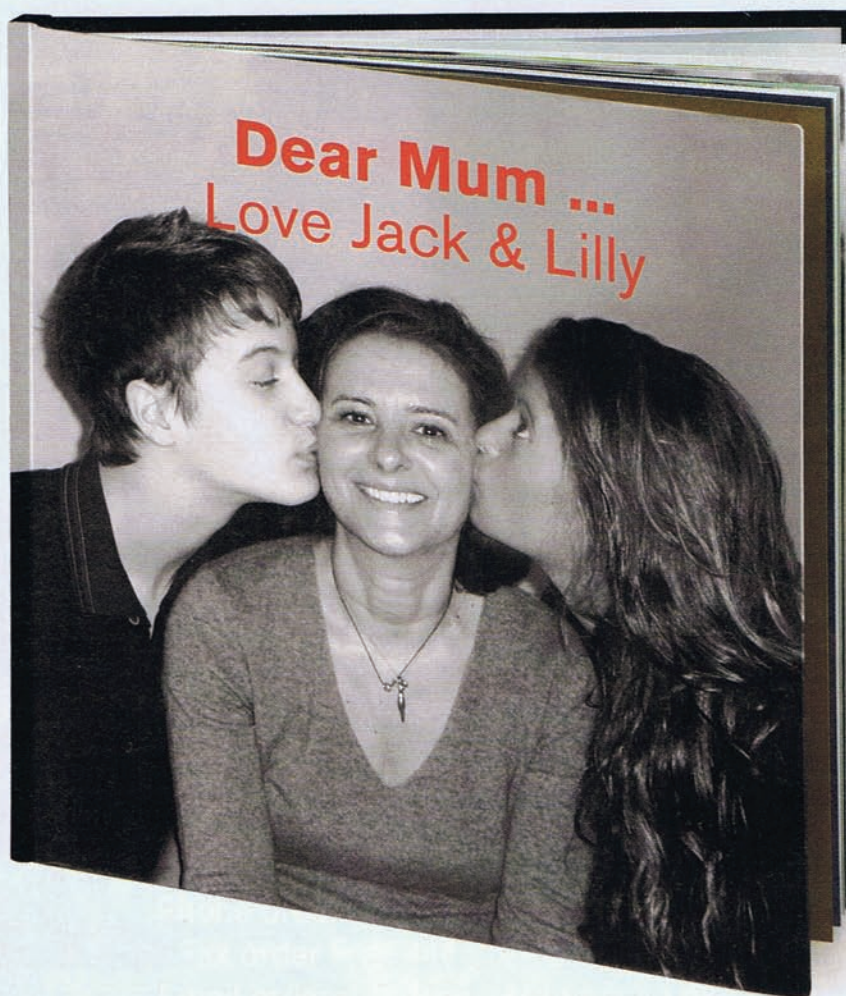
- **Tchaikovsky** Sym No 4 **Schubert** Sym No 8 **Mravinsky**
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Books

What makes us musical? • Listening to John Luther Adams in Alaska

The Natural Musician

On abilities, Giftedness and Talent

By Dina Kirnarskaya

Oxford University Press, HB, 432pp, £35

ISBN 978-0-19-956013-4



If you have ever wondered why we become music lovers and how that passion extends itself – be it as creators, performers or listeners – and how talent can be nurtured, then this book could be for you, especially if you have a particular interest in psychology.

Dina Kirnarskaya is a professor of psychology and musicology and she combines these two disciplines in this tome. Excluding the very readable foreword from Gennady Rozhdestvensky and the author's own preface, as well as pages devoted to references and an index, the main text (translated from Russian and using American spellings) runs to 370 pages. There are no pictures or illustrations. Such facts should not suggest that this is a heavy-duty read, for this is a well presented volume that effortlessly collates Kirnarskaya's many years' experience in her particular practices. And it may be, given the book not only publishes Kirnarskaya's own observations but also backdates to previous similar researches, that *The Natural Musician* becomes the definitive publication of its type.

That said, *The Natural Musician* is not easy to categorise. Probably it is not something that one would wish to read from cover to cover, and although its sections are clearly defined, it may not be an easily assimilated reference book either. Where is the best place to start? There is of course an obvious answer to this question, yet Rozhdestvensky suggests that for anyone questioning the importance and value of music then the last chapter is the one to read first. He is, naturally enough, convinced that we all need music in our lives. What Kirnarskaya seeks to do, I believe, is to address herself to the individual and to explain why we are musical and how our talents can be best utilised; and perhaps to uncover in people dormant musical skills.

However, given that much of this subject has already been researched (as far back as Carl Seashore in 1919) as well as embracing Howard Gardner (born 1941 and highly regarded for his work on multiple intelligences), it occurs to me that a lot of what is proposed is both already known and obvious. Certainly, if like me, the discovery of classical music was as unexpected as it was a remarkably defining

moment – listening to such as Saint-Saëns, Mozart, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Holst (my serendipitous introduction to our wonderful world) seemed to make total sense – then such an innate response to music perhaps defies analysis. How does one know, though? One of my references, back in the 1970s when a teenager, was to read magazines such as *Gramophone* and to find similar thoughts on music and its performance being expressed by professional listeners and writers. That was enough for me!

Within my circle of music-loving friends, Kirnarskaya's opus has divided opinion – one has dismissed it as psychobabble while another can't wait to read it. I am leaning favourably towards it, and if it is not the last word on perfection – some musicians' names are misspelled and the identification of pieces of music is vague – there is something very attractive about this book's presentation and the author's mission.

Colin Anderson

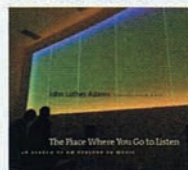
The Place Where You Go to Listen

In Search of an Ecology of Music

By John Luther Adams

Wesleyan University Press, PB, 180pp, £22

ISBN 978-0-8195-6903-5



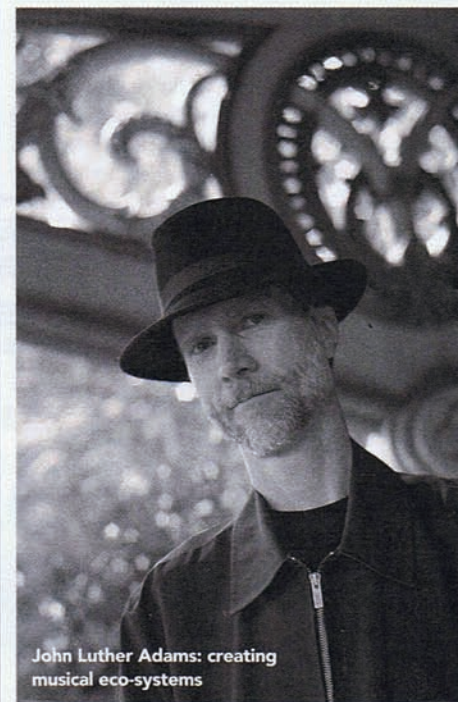
The subtitle *In Search of an Ecology of Music* explains it all. Ecology is the *raison d'être* of John Luther Adams's *The Place Where You Go to Listen*, a sound and light installation housed in a small white room at the Museum of the North on the Fairbanks campus of the University of Alaska. You enter the room and sit before five glass panels that change colour according to the season and the time of day. Computer-generated musical textures are controlled by data based on precise measurements of weather systems, magnetic fields and earthquakes across Alaska. The "search" defines the actual process of bringing this project to fruition, vividly captured in a three-part diary that makes up the book's point of centre. Adams both prefaces and appends his diary with brief pieces in the form of artistic musings, along with essays on the installation and technical data that will probably interest scholars more than general music lovers.

Fortunately Adams writes in clear, descriptive and accessible English, and is an engaging story-teller to boot. The

diary format conveniently lends itself to a cinematic momentum that allows Adams to elegantly crosscut from laboriously developing computer-based sonorities alongside his trusty programmer Jim Altieri into hikes with his wife Cynthia, or else capping a working day via an unexpected encounter with an unusual animal and a welcome whisky. Readers will notice Adams's gift for spinning aphorisms and memorable one-liners in a natural, unpretentious manner ("How can I be tough-minded and generous-spirited at once?" or "The arc of a high fly ball is a mesmerising sculpture of time and motion").

Adams also makes interesting observations about past composers. For example, on Wagner: "It's no disparagement of his achievement to say that he caught the perfect wave. The social, economic and cultural currents of nineteenth-century Europe converged and crested just at the moment that Wagner emerged, giving him access to resources far beyond the wildest dreams of most composers today." Yet while Wagner's "total work of art" concept has survived and transcended Bayreuth many times over, can one experience the fullest impact of Adams's "work without beginning nor end" without making a pilgrimage to Fairbanks? The book includes an extensive Adams bibliography and discography, and not enough photos of the installation.

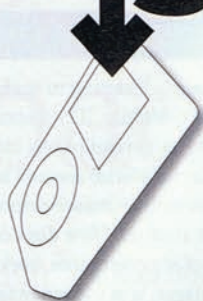
Jed Distler



John Luther Adams: creating musical eco-systems

Tune surfing

James Jolly on a peer-to-peer music streaming site, Nonesuch radio and a Mahler cycle from the New York Phil



A late-summer round-up of things "cyber" before the various promised launches of new services kick in in time for Christmas. First up is a free music service that you will probably have heard about if you've young relatives or friends (or read last month's Audio pages). It comes out of Sweden and is called **Spotify**. It is a peer-to-peer music-streaming service that allows you to listen to thousands of albums with little or none of the buffering you experience on so many streaming sites. The good news is that in many territories it's free – the only "pay back" is that you occasionally have to sit through an advert (15-30 seconds and not more frequently than every half hour). That said, I've just listened the whole of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto without interruption.

The music is streamed at approximately 160kbps, is compatible with Microsoft Windows and Apple Mac OS X (and, using Wine, with Linux as well) and the DRM doesn't allow much more than simply listening as it streams – which is perfectly acceptable as a kind of huge jukebox. Obviously the vast majority of the site is dedicated to rock, pop and jazz, but there's a lot of classical music to found there, and some quite amazing discoveries to be made. (My Beethoven piano concerto recording is a Urania disc with Clara Haskil, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Karajan – a splendid performance, really beautifully accompanied. The meta-data is a bit crazy as Simon Rattle is stirred into the mix – prodigy he may be but he was only five when she died.) There are a lot of EMI recordings on Spotify and some from Sony-BMG, and if you fancy sampling our new Recording of the Year from the Quatuor Ebène, it's there!

You can upgrade to the Premium Service for £9.99 per month which gives you a higher bit-rate (320kbps), no adverts, and access to exclusive material (though I doubt whether much goes on in the classical domain). If you are

curious about the premium offering and want to try it out, with little risk, you can buy a day pass for 99p – you can create your own playlist and have seamless music to accompany whatever activity you plan.

Another destination for interesting music is the Nonesuch website and its radio option. If you like to be entertained in a slightly (but rewardingly) serendipitous way then simply choose one of the genres and let the random track selection take over (there are New Music, Pop-Rock-Alternative, Jazz, World, Classical, Music Theater and Soundtracks to choose from – or you can opt for the Nonesuch Mix and have a little bit of everything). I chose New Music and so far I've heard part of Adams's *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, a Glass string quartet, Pärt's *Darfich...*, David Byrne's *Mea culpa* and Glenn Kotche's *Mobile Parts 1 and 2* (the latter quite a discovery). If you work to music this could be a fun way of having it selected for you without the distraction of speech or adverts (nonesuch.com), and as it's drawing on the Nonesuch catalogue you're guaranteed an



Mahler's First Symphony

Mahler last conducted his own First Symphony on December 16 and 17, 1925, when he led the New York Philharmonic in the work's United States premiere. After he died in 1911, the scores that he used in these performances remained in the Orchestra's Library. It was used in later Mahlerian performances, and later recordings by Bruno Walter in 1923 (see note on top of the title page "B.W. 13 minutes") and Leopold Damrosch in 1925 or 1926 (see page 3, bottom left corner "L.S. 7, 10 minutes").

Deciphering which marks and notations belong to whom is a scholarly adventure well worth the effort and open to friendly disagreement. We encourage you to share your findings at nyphil.org.

This digital version of Mahler by Arthur Bar-Matthews, 1909

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC Archives



NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC Archives go to first page of 170 back to first page previous page next page click on the page to zoom in

Lorin Maazel: get his Mahler cycle at a bargain price from the New York Phil's website (below left)

interesting mix of music in fine performances – and if it plays something you don't like, you can always skip to the next track.

I've recently discovered a splendid new area of the New York Philharmonic's site that will eat into your time if the history of this great orchestra interests you. From the homepage (nyphil.org) follow the links at "About Us" and then click on "Performance History Search". It contains the programme details of every concert given since December 7, 1842, and you can also find details of the concerts given by the New Symphony, founded in 1878 by Leopold Damrosch and which merged with the Philharmonic in 1928. This is a real treasure trove and a fascinating way to track a particular work's engagement with the New York audience. Given the NYPO's long championing of Mahler's music, I did a search on the Fifth Symphony. The first movement was given in 1911 and then the whole symphony for the first time in 1926 under Mengelberg (London had to wait until 1945 to hear the whole work, but it had encountered the *Adagietto* as early as 1909). Then for the next few decades (basically until 1960) the work was entrusted to Mengelberg, Bruno Walter, John Barbirolli (who only did the *Adagietto*) and Dimitri Mitropoulos. Interestingly many of the timings of the various movements are given and for a work like Mahler's Fifth where the *Adagietto*, in particular, has tended to spread with time it's fascinating to see that Barbirolli took it at a flowing 10 minutes, Mitropoulos took 12 minutes, Bernstein – who you'd have expected to "go slow"



– did it in 11 and that the slow coach, back in 1990, was Leonard Slatkin at 12'24". All that said, it's probably best not to get too carried away as many are presumably the publisher's estimates rather than a real performance timing. But the total timings are certainly interesting, though can Gustavo Dudamel really have differed by 12 minutes on two successive nights earlier this year (even given that one was billed as a Rush Hour concert – if so there was some rushing going on *in* the hall too)?

Mahler's Eighth has been given six times, and not surprisingly first by Stokowski! The biggest gap fell between the sixth performance (James Levine in 1976) and the most recent (Lorin Maazel in June this year).

This site is a fascinating resource and one that many other ensembles would do well to emulate, though it must have taken a lot of research. I know I shall be responding to its siren call quite often!

Mention of Maazel's Mahler reminds me that the NYPO has made available all 10 symphonies (though Maazel

doesn't venture beyond the *Adagio* in the Tenth) as downloads, all recorded during his seven-year tenure with the orchestra. You can get hold of them from iTunes, Amazon.com, eMusic, HD Tracks, Classical Archives and Instant Encore (some only to purchasers in the States). Easily the most cost-effective place to get them is eMusic as a substantial work like the Ninth Symphony only runs to four movements, and that's a fraction of the monthly credits you get with even eMusic's basic package of 24 downloads for £9.99 (the first five symphonies notch up exactly 24 downloads – a real bargain).

Now I'm not a huge Maazel fan: I find him extraordinarily variable – brilliant and engaging one minute, utterly cold and calculating the next (and sadly both extremes often during the same piece), but there is some terrific music-making in these performances, and there's no gainsaying the quality of the playing that the NYPO delivered when he was in charge. I think the stand-out performance in the cycle is the Sixth.

An added treat, if you read music, is to follow the First Symphony using Mahler's annotated score (the score from which Mahler conducted the US premiere in 1909, and which was later used by Bruno Walter and Leonard Bernstein – you'll encounter their timings along the way). The scanning and presentation is terrific with a quick page-turn at a click of the mouse. You can zoom in or out and move the page around. A really great job, on a site that's fast becoming a model for an orchestra in this multimedia age. There are also some fascinating videos of Maazel talking about Mahler on the New York Phil's YouTube pages – and whatever one thinks of Maazel as a conductor he's a very engaging and charming talker. And each symphony has its own downloadable programme notes – so you'll need to go back to the NYPO's site if you get your music from eMusic or one of the other retailers who don't offer the facility to download PDFs.

Asplendid 30-disc box of "Sacred Music" arrived the other day from Harmonia Mundi, and thanks to a gross overindulgence on its contents I thought I'd put together a Requiem Mass download playlist this month... ☺



Blogwatch

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/bbesso/>

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra trumpeter **MARK O'KEEFE** blogs about learning to enjoy performing at the BBC Proms

Prommers always know how to have a good time. To us on stage, they are a sea of faces; they sit, they stand (on the higher levels of the hall, some even lie down on the floor, absorbing the sounds wafting from below). Some rest against the balustrades, head tilting here, shoulder against a pillar there, or with head firmly planted in a programme, intent on soaking up every last detail and nuance of the phrase being played at that very moment ...oh the intensity!

I remember my first encounter with the BBC Proms in 1997 – Shostakovich's First Symphony – and I will never forget that exhilarating yet terrifying feeling of playing to some 6000 faces, all hanging on every note we played (not to mention the radio audience). It was too much for me I think, and I suffered with nerves every year for the next five or six, until one day...EUREKA!...a friend of mine and regular Prommer quipped, "you know, it doesn't matter what you play at the Proms, the audience will always love it anyway". My God, he's right, I thought...why have I been putting myself through this torture every year, being terrified almost to the point of not being able to breathe in or out? Dry inside of mouth, wet lips, sweaty, trembling hands, and self-doubt...all the things you never get when doing all those long hours of practice in the living room! ☺

THE ESSENTIAL DOWNLOAD PLAYLISTS NO 27 TEN REQUIEMS

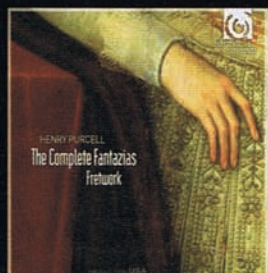
- **Guerrero** *Orchestra of the Renaissance / Noone* (Glossa) eMusic
- **Victoria** *McCreesh* (Archiv) iTunes, DG Webshop
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I will never forget that exhilarating yet terrifying feeling of playing to some 6000 faces

THE WINNERS

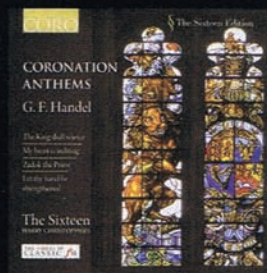
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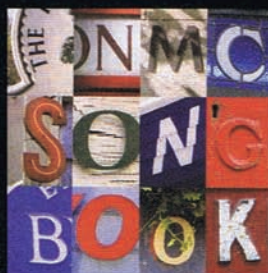
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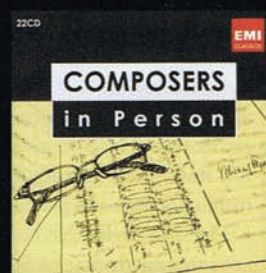
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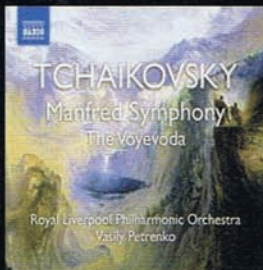
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LONDON

Wigmore Hall, November 3
Tenor Philip Langridge's 70th birthday concert includes selections from Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, as well as a Birtwistle premiere. Details: +44 (0)20 7935 2141 / www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
For more listings, see page 135

The half-billion opera house

Antony Craig enjoys the Norwegian premiere of *Rusalka*, the first new production designed especially for this extraordinary edifice

OSLO

This extraordinary new opera house, which opened last year, literally rises out of the water at Bjørvika, situated in a less salubrious part of the city on the seafront at the Oslo fjord. So a water nymph makes an apt heroine of the first production created for it.

Rusalka, based on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and containing some of Dvořák's loveliest music, was receiving its Norwegian premiere. It's a tricky work to pull off, presenting staging and production conundrums and a lead singer mute for much of the middle act. After its premiere in 1900 it had few outings outside of Prague and only in the past two or three decades has it been acknowledged as one of the pinnacles of Czech opera.

Most directors explore its psychological overtones, though at Glyndebourne this summer, blessed with a wonderful cast headed by the splendid Ana María Martínez, with Brandon Jovanovich as the Prince and Larissa Diadkova a frumpy but vocally spellbinding Ježibaba, Melly Still concentrated on producing one of the most visually beautiful opera stagings I've seen, uncomplicated by layers of psychology. Norwegian National Opera's new Glaswegian opera director, Paul Curran, has ferreted deep inside the mind of his *Rusalka*, a pubescent adolescent whose emerging cravings see her entering a looking-glass world (full of beds) where her youthful vision of undying love is challenged by the subtler workings of her subconscious.

"*Rusalka* is about a little girl growing up, trying to become an adult, trying to become a woman and all the problems that happen there," he says.

His generally slick staging has the benefit of an effective (mainly Norwegian) cast, led by Solveig Kringelborn, a compelling presence and powerful



Oslo's new opera house rises out of the fjord

voice, with a touchingly naive faith in the constancy of her Prince's love. Randi Stene's svelte and finely sung Ježibaba is the antithesis of frump – Curran's questionable "baddies" are beautiful here, whether they be the witch or her counterpart in Itziar Galdos's suitably domineering Foreign Princess. Magne Fremmerlid is a moving Vodník, a very human water goblin (no Alberich he) with a rich, sonorous voice. However, I found Slovakian tenor Miroslav Dvorský's Prince somewhat laboured. The young conductor, Eivind Gullberg Jensen, is full of promise and, now it has the chance to perform regularly in such a fine auditorium, the orchestra is sure to develop further.

Curran's production makes use of some impressive technical wizardry. But the facilities needed to be exceptional – this showpiece venue, the first element of Oslo's urban transformation, has cost the Norwegian public purse a cool half a billion euros. A visually stunning expanse of Italian white marble, it has taken five years to build. The

its pedestrianised sloping marble roof, which rises from the fjord and has become the city's most famous attraction, drawing 1.3 million visitors in the first year alone. Oslo's population is only 570,000.

The auditorium, built of oak treated with ammonium to give it a dark hue, seats 1360 and has exceptional acoustics, enhanced by the dramatic flat chandelier – an important acoustic reflector. A second auditorium seats 400 and the rehearsal and backstage spaces and facilities must be unrivalled.

In another first, the house staged the final of the 10th biennial Queen Sonja International Music Competition. Some 12 of the 42 young singers taking part were from South Korea, who ended up providing three of the six finalists, including the winner. Personally I was more taken with the sole Norwegian finalist, spirited mezzo Angelica Voje, who took the Grieg prize and a £5000 scholarship as best Norwegian participant. I'd also enjoyed the singing of soprano Isa Katharina Gericke, a Norwegian participant of yesteryear, who performed at a private concert for the jury and the Queen at Oscarshall, a candlelit little castle on the fjord.

A statue outside the new house commemorates Norway's most famous singer and one is left with the feeling that Kirsten Flagstad's legacy is in safe hands. As Queen Sonja declared from the opera house stage: "It is as if the competition has come home. We have found our anchor." ☺



next stage will see the opera joined by a new home for the Munch Museum, which houses *The*

Scream (now happily restored after its theft in 2004) among some 1100 paintings by Norway's best-known artist. The most remarked-upon feature of the opera house is

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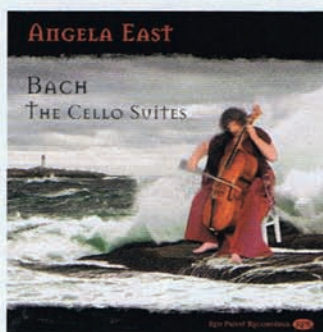
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Musical journeys

Competitive listening

How do you survive 74 recitals of the same repertoire? Just listen, says Donald Rosenberg



Cleveland winner
Martina Filjak

CLEVELAND

It takes enormous devotion, commitment and perseverance to participate in an international music competition. And we're not just talking about the contestants. Ask anyone who sits listening to days of repertoire that keeps repeating itself, as if the stylus were stuck in the groove (to use an ancient analogy).

The 2009 Cleveland International Piano Competition in early August was the ninth biennial event during which I heard every measure of the early rounds and semi-finals. Since 1993, that means a total of nearly 300 pianists playing reams of Bach, Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann and others. The final results of the juries' decisions over the years have been surprising, maddening, obvious or sensible. This year's top winners, Croatia's Martina Filjak and Canada's Dmitri Levkovich, happily fall into the last category.

If the challenges contestants face on their hopeful way to the rewards of exposure and concert engagements are formidable, think about the odyssey that faithful (over-zealous?) listeners take as we try to discern the niceties in myriad performances of Chopin Etudes or Beethoven sonatas. It's tempting to regard the early rounds as an artistic assembly line. But the best way to survive this breed of marathon is to consider it a piano festival rather than a competition. Boredom sets in largely if you're not paying close attention. Like its

predecessors, the 2009 Cleveland was something of a grand-piano roller coaster. Gifted students rubbed keyboards with musicians ready for the concert circuit. Pianists who made little impression in the first round suddenly blossomed in the second, or vice versa. Several contestants, including Filjak, Levkovich and a highly individual American named Edward Neeman, had compelling ideas throughout their preliminary recitals. Why Neeman didn't advance to the semi-finals is one of those competition questions for which there is no satisfactory answer.

The adventure of listening to 74 recitals within the space of a week might appear to be an absurd undertaking, but it's not. Musicians naturally see the notes and markings on the page in vastly different ways – many perfectly valid, if not always to our taste. Otherwise, multiple interpretations of the Liszt Sonata or Schumann's *Davidstänztänze* might prompt audience members to rise up in rebellion.

The cookie-cutter aspect of the Cleveland competition – known from 1975 to 1993 as the Robert Casadesu International Piano Competition – has diminished greatly as the selection process has become more rigorous. These days, when yet another performance of Beethoven's Op 111 is on the horizon, the thought isn't "Oh, no!" More likely, it's "What can you tell me about the music?"

The Ring returns

Thomas May sees how Seattle's widely praised production fared this year under Robert Spano

SEATTLE

When Robert Spano accepted an invitation to conduct Seattle Opera's *Ring* in 2005, the stakes could hardly have been more sharply defined. The Atlanta Symphony's music director, an eloquent champion of the contemporary, had yet to conduct a single Wagner opera.

At the same time, he was entrusted with reformatting the weakest link in the otherwise widely praised cycle directed by Stephen Wadsworth, which the company first unveiled in 2001.

Spano returned to lead Seattle's quadrennial *Ring* in August. But for this round, expectations shifted to something less tangible. The maestro had already proved an excellent fit, rapidly assimilating the essentials and bringing badly needed coherence to the overall musical direction. But this is now the third staging of the so-called "green *Ring*": cracks in the production's reigning aesthetic are becoming more apparent.

Wadsworth and his design team strive to emphasise the humanity of Wagner's characters through a signature psychological realism (which has been described, mistakenly, as "concept-free"). It focuses on closely observed personal interactions, with a correlative in the nature-inspired scenic realism of Thomas Lynch's sets. This has yielded fresh insights into several crucial turning-points in the *Ring*, in particular the Wotan-Fricka relationship.

With each repetition, though, it becomes more difficult to ignore how this approach domesticates Wagner's mythic vitality into something a little too comforting. So attention turned toward the pit in search of a more powerful, "omniscient" perspective. Like Wadsworth, Spano brought wonderful sensitivity to the telling detail – a terrifying pause in Wotan's *Walküre* monologue, the membranous texture of the Norns' prelude. Yet for the larger

span he often seemed merely functional, lacking profile and missing out on the pay-off of sustained Wagnerian melos. Rather than the slow, inevitable *crescendo* of doom over four evenings, Spano gave us lovingly tended patches connected by a kind of default monumentality with no real character.

All the more frustrating since Spano, a conductor of keen musical intelligence, clearly has interesting things to say. Part of the problem was the unevenness of this year's cast. Greer Grimsley's athletically youthful Wotan remains too confined in scope. Recovering from a viral infection during the first of the three cycles, Stig Andersen had a rough first night as Siegfried, forcing Spano to focus on continual recalibrations of balance. The promise of Janice Baird's fresh Brünnhilde failed, mostly, to materialise. Maria Streijffert was a rather wan, down-to-earth Erda.

Outstanding were the richly sung characterisations by Stephanie Blythe (Fricka, Second Norn and Waltraute), Richard Paul Fink as Alberich and Dennis Petersen as an unusually sympathetic Mime. Stuart Skelton brought memorable pathos to Siegmund, while the Hagen of Daniel Sumegi had steely menace. Gremlins bedevilling the first *Götterdämmerung* – twice Spano had to stop the orchestra midstream when the curtain failed to rise – were, one hopes, chased away for the remainder. 



Seattle set: Stuart Skelton, Janice Baird and Margaret Jane Wray

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Mid-October to mid-November includes Stuart Skelton as Grimes in Australia, Philip Langridge's 70th birthday celebrations at the Wigmore Hall and a multi-tasking Murray Perahia in Glasgow

15
OCTOBER

MUNICH Philharmonie

The Munich Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Christian Thielemann performs Bruckner's unfinished Symphony No 9 on October 15, 16, 18 and 19. Details: +49 89 81 81 81 / www.mphil.de

15
OCTOBER

SYDNEY Opera House

Opera Australia presents Britten's *Peter Grimes* conducted by Mark Wigglesworth, with tenor Stuart Skelton. October 15, 17, 21, 24, 27 and 30. Details: +61 2 9318 8200 / www.opera-australia.org.au

16
OCTOBER

WARWICK Arts Centre

Alexander Dmitriev conducts the St Petersburg Symphony in Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6, and Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No 1 with Guy Johnston. Details: +44 (0)24 7652 4524 / www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

17
OCTOBER

SHEFFIELD Upper Chapel

Members of Music in the Round's Ensemble 360 perform Schubert's Notturmo, D897, Schumann's Piano Quartet, Op 47, and Shostakovich's Piano Quintet, Op 57. Details: +44 (0)114 249 6000 / www.musicintheround.co.uk



18
OCTOBER

GATESHEAD The Sage

Stéphane Denève (above) conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in Mahler's *Blumine*, Dvořák's Symphony No 7, and Berg's Violin Concerto with soloist Ilya Gringolts. Details: +44 (0)191 443 4661 / www.thesagegateshead.org

21
OCTOBER

LONDON Royal Hospital Chelsea

The New Professionals Orchestra conducted by John Farrer performs Dvořák's Serenade for Strings, Elgar's Introduction and Allegro, Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, and Albinoni's Oboe Concerto in D with soloist Emily Pailthorpe. Details: +44 (0)20 7881 5324 / www.chelsea-pensioners.org.uk



22
OCTOBER

DALLAS

Meyerson Symphony Center

Jaap van Zweden (above) conducts the Dallas Symphony in Prokofiev, Escher and Saint-Saëns. October 22-24. Details: +1 214 692 0203 / www.dallassymphony.com

25
OCTOBER

NEW YORK

Church of St Ignatius Loyola

A celebration of Purcell, Handel and Howells as part of the "Sacred Music in a Sacred Space" season. Details: +1 212 288 2520 / www.smssconcerts.org

31
OCTOBER

WELLINGTON

Michael Fowler Centre

Leif Segerstam conducts the New Zealand Symphony in his own Symphony No 191, and Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with soprano Solveig Kringelborn. October 31 in Wellington, November 7 in Auckland and November 11 in Christchurch. Details: +64 (0)800 479 674 / www.nzso.co.nz

3
NOVEMBER

LONDON Wigmore Hall

Tenor Philip Langridge's 70th birthday concert includes selections from Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, and a Birtwistle premiere. Details: +44 (0)20 7935 2141 / www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

4
NOVEMBER

HELSINKI Finlandia Hall

The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Oliver Knussen performs Myaskovsky's Symphony No 10, and Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand* with baritone David Wilson-Johnson. Details: +358 9 1480 4378 / <http://yle.fi/rso>

5
NOVEMBER

CHICAGO Symphony Center

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernard Haitink performs Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet is the soloist in the Piano Concerto for the Left Hand. Details: +1 312 294 3000 / www.cso.org

8
NOVEMBER

MILAN La Scala

Antonio Pappano conducts the Filarmonica della Scala in Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 and Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 1 (soloist Ha-Na Chang) on November 8, 10 and 11. Details: +39 02 88 79 1 / www.teatroallascala.org

8
NOVEMBER

SAN FRANCISCO Opera House

San Francisco Opera presents Verdi's *Otello* conducted by Nicola Luisotti, starring Johan Botha in the title-role. November 8, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29 and December 2. Details: +1 415 864 3330 / <http://sfopera.com>

11
NOVEMBER

LUCERNE KKL Luzern

Jonathan Nott conducts the Lucerne Symphony in Mozart's Symphony No 40, and Bartók's Piano Concerto No 3 with soloist Hüseyin Sermet (below), on November 11 and 12. Details: +41 41 226 05 10 / www.sinfonieorchester.ch



12
NOVEMBER

GLASGOW Royal Concert Hall

Murray Perahia performs concertos by JS Bach (BWV1054) and Mozart (K453), directing the Academy of St Martin in the Fields from the keyboard, and conducts Mozart's *Prague Symphony*. Details: +44 (0)141 353 8000 / www.glasgowconcert halls.com

13
NOVEMBER

NOTTINGHAM Royal Concert Hall

Sir Mark Elder conducts the Hallé in Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra and Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and Debussy's *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune*, and "Nuages" and "Fêtes" from *Nocturnes*. Details: +44 (0)115 989 5555 / www.nottinghamclassics.org.uk

14
NOVEMBER

KUALA LUMPUR

Dewan Filharmonik Petronas

The Malaysian Philharmonic conducted by Kevin Field performs Yü Kan Hoe's *Opening of the Stage*, Connession's *Supernova*, and Vask's violin concerto *Distant Light* with soloist Matthew Trusler. Details: +603 2051 7008 / www.malaysianphilharmonic.com

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COMING SOON

SPOTIFY USA?

At the time of going to press, streaming music service Spotify was about to secure \$50m of extra investment, enabling it to expand beyond its current markets of the UK and Sweden and launch in the US market. Given that it already has 2m users this side of the pond, that could enable it to mount a challenge to iTunes.

CHORD CYAN CLICK

ftba

Chord Electronics is working on a compact 130W-per-channel amplifier, the Cyan Click, with both digital and analogue inputs, plus Bluetooth connectivity for portable music players and mobile phones.

MONITOR AUDIO PL200

Platinum broadens its allure

MONITOR AUDIO'S BIG PL300 flagship floorstanding loudspeaker now has a more compact stablemate. The PL200 is designed to bring much of the capability of the top model but be usable in a wider range of rooms.

The cabinet volume may only be about a third of that of the massive PL300 but the new model has been designed to give away only a little in terms of absolute bass extension, maximum sound pressure level and power handling.

The new speaker uses the same tweeter and midrange unit as the PL300 but with smaller bass drivers mounted below them: 16.5cm instead of the larger speakers' 20cm units. The tweeter is Monitor Audio's own wide-range C-CAM ribbon driver, and both the 10cm midrange unit and the twin bass drivers use the company's Rapid Diaphragm Technology, designed to deliver both speed and accuracy through light weight and rigidity.

Sandwiched between skins of the Ceramic Coated Aluminium / Magnesium material, the RDT drivers have a core of honeycomb Nomex, the total construction creating an ultra-light laminate which is as rigid as a steel plate.

The speakers also make extensive use of Anti-Resonance Composite materials, have a Tapered Line Enclosure behind the midrange driver and employ the company's rifled HiVe II high-velocity reflex port for the bass.

Selling for £4750 a pair, the PL200s come with a stabilising plinth and stand just under a metre tall. The shaped, braced cabinet comes in a choice of lacquered Santos Rosewood and Ebony real wood veneers, or black piano lacquer, with the front baffles upholstered in leather.

Monitor Audio

Tel +44 (0)1268 740580

www.monitoraudio.co.uk



Monitor Audio's PL200 speaker



DENON expands its stereo range with £350 player and amp

FOLLOWING THE ENTRY-LEVEL Advanced Evolution hi-fi components of earlier this year, Denon has added midrange models to its line-up, in the form of the DCD-710AECD player and PMA-710AE amplifier. At £350 apiece, they combine proprietary Denon technology and extensive European tuning.

The player uses the company's AL24 Processing analogue waveform recreation technology, and high-accuracy DACs and master clock. It has a USB input for an iPod or memory stick.

The amplifier has a High-Current Single Push-Pull Circuit, a high-power circuit layout and an internal construction designed to keep unwanted vibrations away from the audio signals. It delivers 50W per channel, has a moving-magnet phono stage and provides pre-outs to enable it to be used with an external power amplifier to biampify suitable speakers.

Both products are available in silver or black.

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BANG & OLUFSEN

extends its audio to more Aston Martin cars

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of its audio system for the Aston Martin DBS, Bang & Olufsen has two new systems for the company's V8 Vantage and V12 Vantage models.

The system combines the company's Acoustic Lens Technology tweeters, digital signal processing and ICEPower digital amplification, and in the convertible V8 Vantage Roadster can even alter the sound to compensate for the roof being open or closed.

The BeoSound V8 Vantage and V12 Vantage systems are available from this autumn.

Bang & Olufsen

Tel +44 (0)118 969 2288



B&O extends its Aston Martin audio range

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

The future of FM radio

According to the Digital Britain report, BBC Radio 3 could vanish from FM as soon as 2015. Progress or misguided thinking, asks Andrew Everard

AS I EXPLAINED last month, the *Digital Britain* report, which outlines the Government's route to making the UK a digital world leader, plans to revolutionise the way we all access the internet.

It also proposes a switch-off of FM service for the main national and local radio stations as soon as the end of 2015, and that would mean we'll all have to listen to Radio 3 either via DAB or some other digital broadcast system, or streamed over the internet. Yes, there are those who'll tell you that dyed-in-the-wool FM radio enthusiasts are deluding themselves: the transmission of signal from studio to broadcast transmitters is already digital; DAB offers CD-quality sound (remember that one?) with no hiss and crackle; and adapters will be available to let us stick-in-the-muds carry on using our existing tuners after the switchover.

Sorry, it just doesn't wash, for all the report's protestations of incentives to make more affordable digital radios available, and the

opening up of the airwaves to give us all more choice, much of it in the form of "ultra-local" stations still available on FM.

Most of the problem stems from the current DAB technology, which is hamstrung by its origins in the early days of MP3 audio compression. It's just not good enough for high-quality music transmission, or at least not without greatly increased bit-rates, which hog digital spectrum. And that means less space for even more radio stations to be



Analogue radio has been with us since before the days of this beautiful Bang & Olufsen set

crammed onto the digital airwaves.

Yes, the DAB+ standard uses more efficient compression and thus can give better sound quality for the same data-rate. But it would mean a significant proportion of those DAB radios already in use would need replacing, so the report commits us to carrying on with the current standard for now, with DAB+ perhaps happening some time after the switchover.

This thinking overlooks the fact that tens of millions of analogue radios will be good only for landfill, or will need a lash-up digital tuner add-on in order to function at all. It's not exactly environmentally friendly, is it? And that's before you take into account the fact that the digital transmission/reception chain, from start to finish, uses more energy than analogue.

Of course, the report has a series of checks and balances to ensure that millions of listeners don't lose their radio service on switchover day, but it's hard not to feel that some of the conditions it feels will be met by the end of 2013, thus triggering the two-year switchover process, are somewhat ambitious.

Quite apart from the quality we can all now enjoy from BBC Radio 3 on FM, and the large amounts of money so many of us have invested in aerials, tuners and systems to allow us to do so, there's the argument about the ubiquity of radio to be considered.

Most of us will have a number of radios around the house, and analogue portables are inexpensive – under £10 will buy you a reasonable one. And then we come to the other major problem: how many new cars, still likely to be on the road in 2015, are ready for DAB? ●

Infidelities



...And on the seventh day we didn't buy hi-fi

Let's put the religious considerations aside for a moment and consider the fact that, since the Sunday Trading Act came into force 15 years ago, giving the green light to those businesses which had flouted the law until then, many people have done their shopping on a Sunday.

Indeed, for many hard-working people, the Act effectively doubled the amount of time they had to shop each week, and gave them the choice between the frantic Saturday rush and a day of rest, or taking advantage of the (slightly) quieter Sunday shopping experience.

As a result, you can buy most things on a Sunday, from the weekly groceries up; I bought my last car on a Sunday, taking advantage of the quieter roads to test-drive an unfamiliar vehicle.

But so many of our specialist hi-fi and home cinema shops still expect their customers either to cram into the shop on a Saturday or to take time off work to have an audition or make a purchase. I wouldn't be surprised if some of them had half-day closing on a Wednesday, too, just to complete the 1950s image.

When I suggested elsewhere that this might be a tad short-sighted, I got a bumpy response. "I would simply leave if I was forced to work on Sundays," said one hi-fi shopworker, adding that "It is a fallacious belief that opening on Sunday would generate extra trade. Customers have six days to shop between the hours of 09:30 and 18:00, which is more than enough".

That kind of misses the point. I'm not saying retailers should open seven days a week, merely that they might do better if they were available when people actually had time to shop.

Andrew Everard

Audio Editor

Before FM radio dies...

The *Digital Britain* report sets out conditions to be met before the FM radio switch-off process can begin. By the end of 2013, it suggests, the following will happen:

Listenership

The requirement, it says, is for 50 per cent of all radio listening to be digital – a massive growth in the uptake of digital radios. Not long before the report was published, the BBC's Tim Davie told a conference that "continuing current [DAB radio] purchase trends would not lead to radio switchover in our lifetime".

Coverage

National DAB coverage will, by 2013, be equivalent to FM availability, and DAB local radio will reach 90 per cent of the population and all major roads, the report says. It doesn't say how many cars will have DAB by then.

Affordability

The report suggests DAB radios will become as cheap as current analogue models. Making radio portable, it says, requires "a dedicated digital medium – DAB". Radio apparently isn't portable at the moment...

You can buy most things on a Sunday, from the weekly groceries to a car

MARANTZ M-CR502DAB

Innovative all-in-one system has flexibility and performance

This sleek, clever system is well judged for those who want style and sound, says Tony Williams



Marantz system looks simple and has clean lines but it packs plenty of flexibility

AUDIOPHILES AGREE THAT a system split into its constituent parts will give the best sound, but will also concede there are situations in which an all-in-one system has its own appeal. Perhaps you want a compact package for a second room, or it could be you live in a small apartment or studio.

Then, of course, there's the convenience of a system: everything just works together, one handset can control all the functions and you cut down on the number of cables and mains sockets you need, not to mention usually gaining facilities such as sleep and alarm timers.

In recent years these packaged systems have become very good indeed, with performance to match budget-price separates and the flexibility to add on extra components such as recorders, just as you can with "proper" hi-fi components.

What's more, it's possible to buy all of these systems with or without loudspeakers, allowing some degree of tuning to suit the room in which the set-up is to be used.

The system we have here, the Marantz M-CR502DAB, certainly has style on its side. It combines the looks of the company's high-end products with a sleek, modern twist, and promises much in terms of performance, thanks to a novel four-channel amplification arrangement. This can be used to drive a single pair of speakers with 50W per channel, biampify a suitable pair of speakers with 2x25W, or drive two pairs of speakers with 25W per channel.

When using two pairs of speakers, it's possible to assign one of five "sound characteristic" settings to each pair, and adjust the level of the "B" speakers relative to the "A" pair. The sound settings offer a flat frequency response, a -12dB

bass cut below either 100Hz or 60Hz, and the same bass cuts with a 3dB boost in the 400Hz region, while the speaker "B" level can be adjusted over a +/-6dB range relative to the main pair.

The system also has conventional tone controls, while onboard sources include a CD player able to handle CD-R/RW discs and both MP3 and WMA files, and a radio tuner. In the UK version tested here this offers both AM/FM RDS and DAB bands, with an AM/FM-only version available in other markets. Thirty FM presets are available to store stations, along with 20 for AM and 99 for DAB.

Other inputs extend to a 3.5mm stereo socket on the front panel for portable music players, a USB socket for music stored on pen-drive devices, and two conventional line-level inputs on phono sockets on the rear panel.

There's an auxiliary line output, a headphone socket and a mono feed for an active subwoofer, while the system can also be used with the Marantz IS201 iPod dock, connected into the rear-panel inputs.

PERFORMANCE

The Marantz system's display is clear and its controls logical. Outwardly it's a very simple system but its broad range of capabilities means it takes a while to get a grip on what it can do, not to mention giving the buyer plenty to explore.



System can biampify or drive four speakers



P.J.

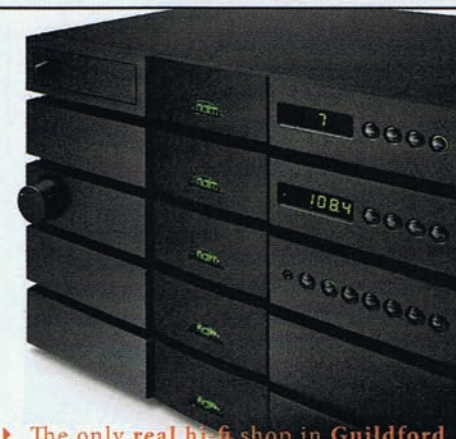
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MARANTZ M-CR502DAB

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Price £400

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Inputs Three line inputs (one on front panel), USB

Tuner DAB/FM RDS/AM, 50 presets (+99 on DAB)

Outputs 2prs speakers, subwoofer, headphones

Accessories supplied Remote handset

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Tel 02890 279830

www.marantz.com

Using a pair of compact speakers and an active subwoofer, I tried the various amplifier and "sound characteristic" settings, and found the bass-cut options make the sound a bit thin when speakers are positioned properly, and may only be of use if you have to place them on a table or nice reverberant sideboard.

Meanwhile the 400Hz boost just gives a bit of bloom, not always welcome, which is why after sufficient experimentation I went back to the basic "flat" setting. After all, there are conventional tone controls on offer if a little tuning of the sound is required.

More interesting are the amplifier options available, even if the choice between single-wired operation at 50W per channel and biamplication of suitable speakers at 25W per channel will be as much speaker-dependant as a matter of taste. If you have speakers of relatively low sensitivity, the more powerful amplifier option may prove preferable, but most modern designs will show few benefits from the extra power, especially in smaller rooms.

But with speakers benefiting greatly from biamplication, you have the choice of the better focus and bass definition delivered by having each drive unit powered separately, or the marginally better dynamics and punch on tap when single-wiring with more power. Hmm...

Overall, though, the sound of the Marantz is involving and satisfying, and well up to the standards of similarly priced systems. There's a

slight sense that it plays things a little safe, not quite having the treble openness of a carefully chosen CD player and amplifier at the same price, and the bass can occasionally sound like it's trying a little too hard, but these characteristics should be taken in context.

First, there are precious few CD/amplifier combinations available for just £400 these days. Second, even if you do find such a combination, you're not going to get a three-band digital/analogue radio tuner thrown in, let alone USB connectivity. And third, given the kind of modest speakers with which the system is unfortunately likely to be used, the slightly soft balance here is probably no bad thing: it will flatter both brash, hard-edged, compressed recordings and speakers with a lack of low-end conviction.

The result is a well balanced, easy-to-enjoy sound whether you play music from the fine CD player, effective radio or even a USB memory stick. This system isn't the one to buy if you want to experience the impression of a full symphony orchestra in a cavernous living space – but then it would be unfair to expect as much at the price.

Unless you're in a very strong signal area, you're going to need an external aerial or two to make the most of the tuners built-in here. On FM in particular, the M-CR502DAB thrives on a strong signal, delivering live concerts with good ambience and space.

It would also be unfair to expect miracles if you use maximum MP3 compression to pack as much music as possible onto your pen-drive: the Marantz will make it clear what's been lost. Stick to 256kbps as an absolute minimum, and preferably 320kbps, for the best results.

Finally, be aware that the M-CR502DAB doesn't offer the kind of iPod operation found on systems with dedicated dock solutions: the Marantz dock is a fairly basic model with analogue outputs, as is common at this level.

However, for all these minor drawbacks, this system is to be commended. It's beautifully built and sounds very competitive indeed, whichever of its sources and inputs you choose to use. Spend £150 or £200 on some high-quality bookshelf speakers to partner it and you're unlikely to be disappointed. **C**

SUPER AUDIO CORNER

Andrew Everard's verdict on some recent high-definition recordings

MOZART: COMPLETE SONATAS FOR KEYBOARD AND VIOLIN, VOLS 7 & 8

Gary Cooper,

Rachel Podger

Channel Classics

CCSSA28109

Hybrid multichannel/
stereo SACD

A seriously exciting pair of discs, recorded by Channel Classics' founder Jared Sacks, it comes with an impressive list of high-end audio equipment used in the recording and mastering.

The delightful performances have been covered elsewhere (10/09) but this is a duo with a deliciously intimate and entirely credible sound, underpinned with a fine sense of the recording venue's ambience around the listener, thanks to the use of the SACD surround channels to hint at the space.

VERDI: REQUIEM

Sols; London Symphony

Chorus, LSO / Colin Davis

LSO Live ⑧ ② LSO0683

Hybrid multichannel/
stereo SACD

Last month I was rather taken with the sound of the LSO Live Creation, and here is another striking release, recorded live at the Barbican in January by Classic Sound for the ever-growing "own label".

It's another big and magnificent recording, with excellent ambience and presence, superb clarity and attack to the sound, and not a sign of stress when things get really tumultuous. Not for me to comment too much on the performance but the sheer power in the efforts of all concerned is beautifully revealed in this demonstration-quality recording, amply served by the multichannel SACD mix.

I'm not sure I'll be buying the *Dies irae* ringtone from the LSO website, though...

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WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 10.1

Design, build and sound way beyond its budget price

The latest in the long-running Diamond line lives up to its heritage, says Andrew Everard

FOR MANY YEARS, we Brits seem to have been determined that £100 was what one spent on a pair of speakers. Before quite a lot of the market wandered off and started paying more attention to home cinema packages, flatscreen TVs and iPods, every year saw the leadership in this sector changing hands, as the likes of KEF, Mission, Tannoy and Wharfedale traded blows.

The speaker arguably responsible for all this, Wharfedale's Diamond, is getting on for 30 years old. Work began back in 1981, and the speaker, with its compact dimensions and polypropylene mid/bass unit delivering a tight, punchy sound, became a best-seller at just under £80. Even then the success attracted competition, and Wharfedale responded with Diamond IIs, Super Diamonds, Active Diamonds and so on.

In recent years the product cycle has lengthened somewhat, and it's six years since the Diamond 9 range was launched by Wharfedale, now part of IAG. Now we have an all-new Diamond 10 range, like the Diamond 9s designed and engineered in the UK but built in IAG's own factory in China. The 10.1 model we have here is one up from the entry-level 10.0 and sells for £200 a pair, while the range now extends to a larger standmount model, the Diamond 10.2, no fewer than five floorstanders – Diamond 10.3–10.7 – two surround speakers, three centres and two active subwoofers.

The 10.1 uses a 12.5cm Kevlar weave mid-bass driver, with a large mounting flange for more solid fixing, a diamond pattern moulded into the surround to improve damping, and a lower-profile, open chassis for improved airflow. The 25mm tweeter has a diffuser in front of it, both protecting the driver and smoothing out the response up to 30kHz, and the grille itself has been designed with invisible fixings.

The cabinet itself retains the curved sides of the Diamond 9, designed for strength and to

reduce standing waves, but is stronger thanks to improved bonding techniques, and has a composite front baffle.

The speakers are available in a choice of six finishes, with piano-gloss front baffles, and the twin bass-reflex ports of the 9s have been moved to the rear, making their work less obvious. Finally, there are novel offset biwire terminals, making it easier to use them with substantial cables.

PERFORMANCE

Set-up of the Diamond 10.1 is pretty flexible: Wharfedale suggests they'll be fine as long as they're 5cm from a rear wall and 70cm in from side walls, at least a couple of metres apart and with a mild toe-in towards the listening position. I used them on a solid pair of Atacama stands, and after some experimentation ended up with them around 30cm from the rear wall. I also biwired them, this bringing the usual slight benefits in focus and bass control.

It's worth mentioning that bass: considering the 10.1s stand just under 30cm tall, they have a weighty, rich sound. Wharfedale claims bass extension down to 45Hz, and I wouldn't argue too much with that having tried the speakers with some test-tones.

Best of all, however, is that the low-end is tight and fast, ensuring both fine substance to orchestral recordings and excellent definition in the lower octaves of solo piano, not to mention good texturing of orchestral basses.

There's a smooth handover from the mid/bass



Diamond 10.1:
a fine performer

WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 10.1

Type Two-way bass-reflex standmount speaker

Price £200/pr

Drive units 12.5cm Kevlar-weave mid/bass, 25mm tweeter

Sensitivity 86dB/W/m

Nominal impedance 6 ohms

Recommended amplifier power 20-100W

Nominal frequency response 45Hz-24kHz

Dimensions (HxWxD) 29.6x19.4x27.8cm

Finishes Blackwood, Cinnamon Cherry, Cool Maple, Rosewood Quilted, Walnut Pearl, Wenge, Winter Maple

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driver to the tweeter – it occurs at around 1.6kHz – and this gives the speaker a well integrated sound, along with credible vocal and instrumental tonality. Yes, there's a little brightness in the high treble, which may be particularly apparent in sparsely furnished rooms as a slight glare, but in more usual domestic circumstances this gives the speakers excellent openness and "air", greatly adding to the presence and ambience of the music they're playing.

Dynamics are delivered with real conviction and, with some attention paid to toe-in, there's fine sound-staging and stereo focus – indeed, in these areas the Wharfedale Diamond 10.1s can challenge more than a few pricier rivals. What's more, they thrive on the end of better amplification than one might imagine suitable for speakers at this level, while flattering price-comparable electronics.

Just avoid sources or amplification with a tendency to treble forwardness, as this will be all too apparent through these revealing, satisfying speakers, which look set to re-establish Wharfedale as a serious contender in this highly competitive market sector. Ⓒ

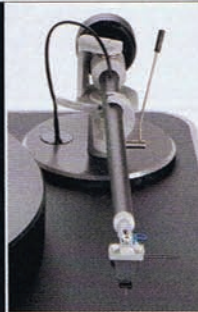


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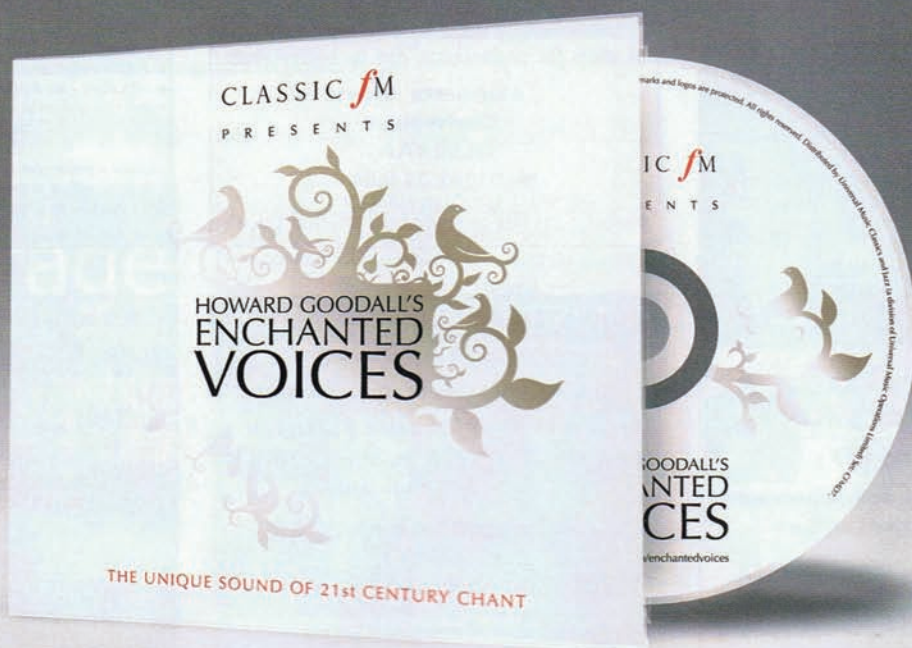


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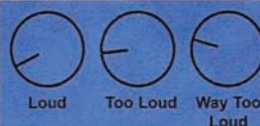


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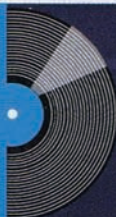
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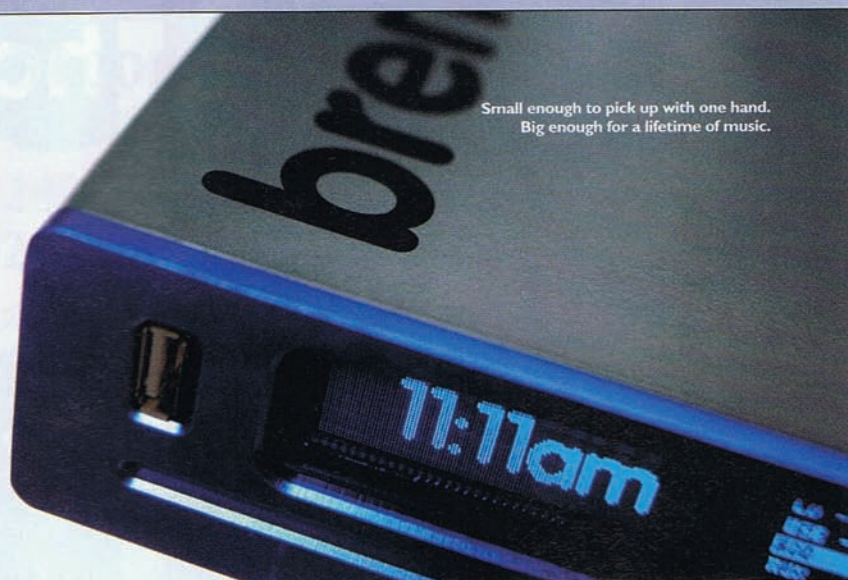
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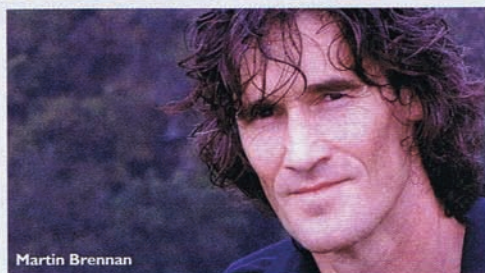
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CDs are great but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore - that's why Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7.

The face behind Brennan



Martin Brennan

Martin is a physicist and computer engineer. He has around twenty silicon chips to his name, written over a million lines of computer code and co-designed the world's first 64 bit games computer. "I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi changer. My second was a ten CD changer for the car. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. These players were fine but a bit clunky - there were several seconds of silence between CDs and in the car I could never find the right CD.

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Advertisers Index

A	
Audiolincs	139
Audio Reference	142
B	
Bath CDs	PR112
Boydell & Brewer	76
Brennan JB7	148
Bridge Records	90
Brotherwood Automility	134
C	
Cadogan Hall	36
Chandos	25, 60
Channel Classics	33
Chantage	151
Clarinet Classics	84
Classics Direct	PR132
D	
Dali DK	56
Dertour	82
Divine Art	70
E	
ECM Records	52
EMI	4
English National Opera	155
F	
Farao GmbH	84
H	
Harmonia Mundi	113
Hungarian Liszt Society	110
Hyperion	72
I	
ICS	92
L	
London Music Masters	110
London Philharmonic Orchestra	106
LSO Live	11
M	
Margarete Rolle Promotions	110
MDT Classics Ltd	MR100
Metronome	80
M.S.M.C	90
N	
Naïve Classique	50
Naxos	7, 62
NMC Recordings	56
O	
Oehms Classics	99
Onyx Classics	59
OP111 Productions	106
Opera Rara	32
Opus Arte	116
Orchid Music	70
P	
PJ Hifi	138
R	
Rayleigh Hifi	76
Red Priest	132
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra	76
S	
Sony	20, 44
Supraphon	83
T	
Testament	124
The Royal Concertgebouw	34
The Sixteen	59
U	
Universal	22
W	
Welsh National Opera	98
Wigmore Hall	156
Y	
Yamaha	46
Z	
Zigzag Territories	80
North America	
Allegro	A9
Crystal	A10
Naxos	A4
San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	A6
Sony	A10

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Reviews
Index

A

Adams	
Doctor Atomic Symphony	128
Agricola	
Gaudeamus omnes in Domino	111
Anonymous	
Agnes, Beatae Virginis	113
Allmayne and Corant	99
Ano Christum, in cuius	
thalamum introivi	113
The Battle	99
Beata Agnes in medio flammarum	113
Cantabunt sancti canticum novum	113
Chanson nouvelle de tous les	
cris de Paris	111
Corant	99
Corant (de la Durette)	99
Coranto	99
England be Glad	109
The Flying Horse	99
Gray's Inn Maske	99
Hec est preclarum	109
John come kiss me now	99
King's Pavan	109
Madame d'amours	109
Maugré danger pompera	
Magdalene	111
O waerde mont	111
Se j'ayme mon amy	111
Sequenza in onore di Sant'Agnes	113
Stans Beata Agnes	113
Tom of Bedlam	99
Tous nobles cœurs	111
Austin	
Concertino (ed Ellis)	74

B

Bacewicz	
Overture	74
Violin Concertos – Nos 1, 3 & 7	74
Bach, JS	
Cantatas – Nos 13, 73,	
81 & 144	102
Cantatas – Nos 57, 110 & 151	102
Goldberg Variations	94
Solo Cello Suite No 1, BWV1007	91
Solo Cello Suites – No 1, BWV1007;	
No 2, BWV1008 (arr viola)	95
Bach, WF	
Fantasies – FK19; FK23; FKv2	94
Fugues – Nos 1, 2, 3 & 6	94
Harpichord Sonatas – FK3; FK7	94
Polonaises – Nos 1, 7, 8 & 11	94
Bachelor	
A Gallyard by Mr Dan Bachelor	99
Ballard	
La courante sarabande	99
Bartók	
Violin Concerto No 2	122
Beethoven	
Fidelio – Gott! welch Dunkel hier!	117
Leonore Overture No 3	125
Piano Concerto No 1	101
Piano Concerto No 2	74, 75, 101
Piano Concerto No 3	74
Piano Concerto No 4	128, 75
Piano Sonatas – Nos 1, 19 & 20	101
Piano Sonata No 2	97, 101
Piano Sonatas – Nos 3, 5 & 18	101
Piano Sonatas – Nos 6; 26; 29,	
'Hammerklavier'	101

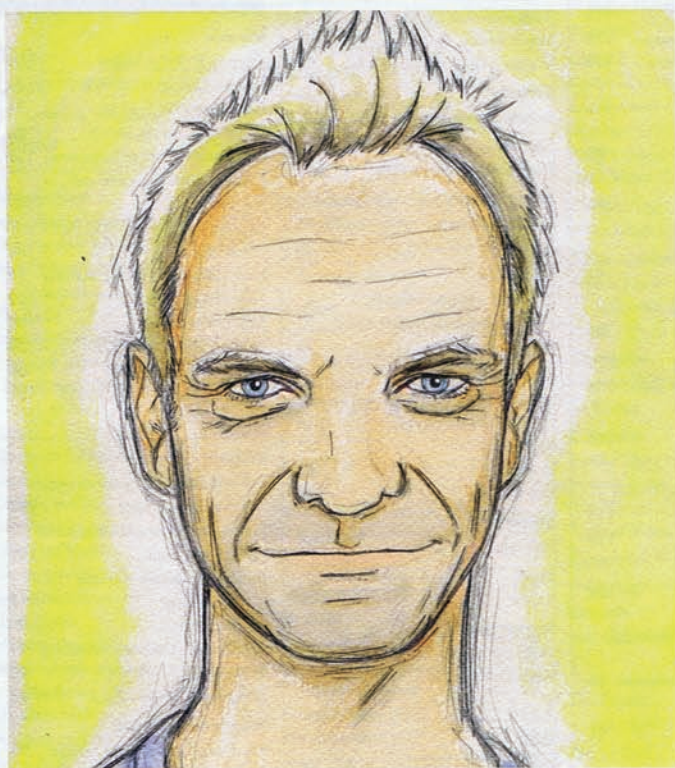
Piano Sonatas – No 8, 'Pathétique'; No	
14, 'Moonlight'	101
Piano Sonatas – Nos 10 & 17	101
Six Ecossaises, WoO83	97
Symphonies – Nos 2 & 6	77
Symphony No 5	125
Violin Concerto	74
Beethoven/Liszt	
Symphonies – Nos 1 & 2	101
Symphony No 5	101
Symphony No 7	101
Bellini	
Norma	114
Benedictus de Opatitiis	
Sub tuum presidium	109
Berg	
Violin Concerto	74
Berlioz	
Requiem	129
Roman Carnival Overture	122
Blondeau	
Basses dances – La Magdalena	111
Bofrin	
Et trop penser	111
Boito	
Mephistopheles – To the moonlit waves	
they cast him	115
Bouchot	
Les cris de Marseille	111
Brahms	
German Requiem	129
Hungarian Dances, WoO1 – No 5	
(orch Schmeling)	87
Piano Concerto No 2	125
Piano Quintet, Op 34	88
String Quartet No 1, Op 51 No 1	88
Symphonies – 1, 3 & 4	87
Symphony No 2	87, 125
Variations on a Theme by Haydn, 'St	
Antoni Chorale', Op 56a	87
Britten	
In memoriam Dennis Brain	105
Les illuminations	105
Movements for Clarinet Concerto	105
Rondo concertante	105
Untitled Fragment for Strings	105
Variations	105
Violin Concerto	75
Bruckner	
Symphonies – Nos 3 & 4	77
Busnoys	
Joye me fruit	111
Mon mignault musequin	111
Byrd	
Ave maris stella	102
Gradualia – Propers for the Nativity of	
the Virgin; for the Annunciation of	
the Virgin; for the Assumption	
of the Virgin	102
Memento, salutis auctor	102
O gloriosa Domina	102
Quem terra, pontus aethera	102
Salve regina	102
Salve sola Dei genetrix	102
Byrne	
Mea culpa	128
C	
Cage	
In a Landscape	93
Campo	
Les cris de Marseille	111
Catalani	
La Wally – I'll float into the	
distance	115
La Wally – Ne mai dunque avrò	
pace?...Ohime!	115

Chabrier	
Souvenirs de Munich	93
Champion	
Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena	111
Cherubini	
Anacréon Overture	122
Requiem	129
Chopin	
Etudes – Op 10; Op 25	94
Etudes, Op 25 – Nos 2, 3 & 5	97
Mazurka No 30, Op 50 No 1	97
Piano Concerto No 2	122
Piano Sonata No 3	97
Chopin/Liszt	
Polish Songs, Op 74	94
Cilea	
Adriana Lecouvreur – See now, I am	
exhausted; Poor little flowers	115
Gloria – O mia cuna	115
Compère	
Mais que che fut secrètement	111
Le Renvoy	111
Coprario	
Fantasies pour viole	103
Funeral Teares	103
The Masque of Squires	103
Songs of Mourning	103
Couperin, F	
Les goûts-réunis – Suite	91
Crumb	
Solo Cello Sonata	78
D	
De Fesch	
Sonata, Op 8 No 3	91
De la Rue	
Amy je prends conge de vous	111
Autant en emporte le vent	111
Dieu la gard la bergerotte	111
Entre Petronne et Saint Quentin	111
Fors seulement Pipelare	111
Helas Oliver Vasselin	111
Je ne pourroy plus celer	111
Joye me fuit et douleur	111
Kyrie improvise	111
Mon mignault musequin	111
On doit bein aymer l'oyselet	111
Pourquoy non	111
Puisque Robin j'ay a nom	111
Quand je voy renouveler	111
Vecy le mai	111
Debussy	
Jeux	122
Delius	
Requiem	129
A Village Romeo and Juliet – The	
Walk to the Paradise Garden	79
Deransart	
Les cris de la rue	111
Dowland	
Galliards – A Gallyard upon the	
Gallyard Before; The Battle	
Galliard	99
Ducol	
Le cri	111
Durufié	
Requiem	129
Dvořák	
Cello Concerto	122
The Golden Spinning-Wheel	79
Symphony No 7	79
E	
Eccles/Bonporti	
Sonata No 11	91
Elgar	
Enigma Variations	79, 122

In the South, 'Alasiao', Op 50	79
Serenade, Op 20	79
F	
Fauré	
Après une rêve, Op 7 No 1	86
Requiem	129
Fayrfax	
Lauda vivi alpha et oo	109
Fennimore	
Five Rivers	99
Ferguson	
Piano Concerto	74
Finzi	
Eclogue, Op 10	74
Foerster	
Cello Concerto	78
Franck	
Symphony	122
G	
Giordano	
Fedora – Tutto tramonta	115
Siberia – Nel suo amore	115
Gismonti	
Águas and Dança	88
Carmen	88
Chora Antônio	88
Dança dos escravos	88
Dois Violões	88
Lundú	88
Mesticó and Caboclo	88
Palhaço	88
Saudações	88
Sertões Veredas	88
Zig Zag	88
Glazunov	
Violin Concerto	125
Gluck	
Iphigenie in Aulis – Overture	75
Górecki	
Good Night, 'In memoriam Michael	
Vyrer', Op 63	93
Guerrero	
Requiem	129
H	
Handel	
12 Solo Sonatas, Op 1	88
Agrippina – Pur ritorno a rimirarvi;	
Vieni, o cara	114
Alcina – Overture; Pensa a	
chi geme	114
Alexander's Feast	104
Apollo e Dafne – Come rosa in su	
la spina	114
Chaconne, HWV435	95
Dalla guerra amorosa	114
Keyboard Suites, Set 1 – No 2 in F,	
HWV427; No 8, HWV433	95
Ode for St Cecilia's Day	104
Orlando – Sorge infausta una	
procella	114
Serse – me felice, ho smarrito; Del mio	
caro baco amabile	114
Siroe, re di Persia – Overture; Se il	
mio paterno amore; Gelido in	
ogni vena	114
Tamerlano – Amor da guerra	114
Haydn	
Complete Overtures	79
Keyboard Sonata No 62,	
HobXVII/6	95
Sonata un piccolo divertimento:	
Variations, HobXVII/6	95
Symphonies – No 41; No 44; No 49	81
Symphonies – No 49; No 80	81
Symphony No 94, 'Surprise'	122

Violin Concerto, HobVIIa/1	81
Heggie	
The End of the Affair – Nineteen	
Forty-four, March, May, June	115
Heitzeg	
Sandhill Crane	99
Henry VIII	
Adieu madame	109
Consorts – VIII; XII; XIII	109
En vray amour	109
Helas madame	109
O My Heart	109
Tandemaken	109
Though some saith	109
Henze	
Symphony No 9	103
Heyne	
Ce n'est pas jeu	111
Holborne, A	
Mr Holborn's Last Will and	
Testament	99
I	
d'Indy	
Istar	122
J	
Jackson, G	
Ave Maria	104
Cecilia Virgo	104
Honor, virtus et potestas	104
Hymn to the Trinity	104
Lux mortuorum	104
Not No Faceless Angel	104
O sacrum convivium	104
Orbis patrat optime	104
Salve regina 2	104
Salve regina	104
Song (I gaze upon you)	104
To Morning	104
Jacotin	
Beati omnes	109
Janequin	
Le cris de Paris	111
Johnson II, R	
Allmayne and Corant	99
Almans – Hit and Take It	99
The Noble Man	99
Pavins – in F minor; in C minor	99
The Prince's Almain	99
Josquin des Pres	
Plaine de dueil	111
K	
Kastner	
Les cris de Paris	111
Kennedy	
Natural Periclitati	99
Knaifel	
O Heavenly King	93
Kotche	
Mobile – Parts 1 & 2	128
Krenek	
Serenade, Op 4	93
Krommer	
String Quartets – Op 19 No 2; Op 74	
No 3; Op 103 No 3	89
L	
Lalo	
Fantaisie norvégienne	81
Symphonie espagnole, Op 21	81
Violin Concerto, Op 20	81
Lebeau	
Les cloches du monastère	111
Ledoux	
Cri de blog	111

Leoncavallo					
La bohème – Musette varia sulla bocca viva; Mimi Pinson la biondina	115				
Pagliacci – His eyes were flashing with anger; Through the air they soar; My fate is in your hands	115				
Zazà – Angioletto il tuo nome?	115				
Liebertson					
Ocean that has no West and no East	99				
Liszt					
Benedictus and Offertorium, S381	91				
Die Drei Zigeuner, S383	91				
Elegie No 1, S130	91				
Elegie No 2, S131	91				
Epithalam, S129	91				
Grand Duo concertant, S128	91				
Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 2	97				
La lugubre gondola, S134	91				
Romance oubliée, S132	91				
M					
Mahler					
Blumine	81				
Das Lied von der Erde	104				
Symphonies – Nos 1-10	129				
Symphony No 10 – Adagio	81				
Totenfeier	81				
What the Wild Flowers Tell Me	81				
Martinů					
Bergerettes, H275	91				
Cello Concerto No 1	78				
Piano Trios – No 1, H193; No 2, H327; No 3, H322	91				
Martucci					
Colore orientale, Op 44 No 3	83				
Minuetto, Op 57 No 2	83				
Momento musicale, Op 57 No 3	83				
Novelletta, Op 82 No 2	83				
Piano Concerto No 2	83				
Serenata, Op 57 No 1	83				
Mascagni					
Iris – Un dì (ero piccina)	115				
Lodoletta – Ah il suo nome	115				
Massenet					
Thais – Méditation	86				
Mendelssohn					
Abschied, 'Es wehn die Wolken über Meer'	105				
Allegro in B flat	95				
Allegro, Chorale and Fugue	95				
Am Seegestad	105				
Andante and Variations in D	95				
Andante con moto in G	95				
Andante in D	95				
Andante in F	95				
Der Verlassene	105				
Der Wasserfall	105				
Die Nachtigall	105				
Durch Fichten am Hügel	105				
Erinnerung	105				
Faunenklage	105				
Four Songs – Der Tag; Reiterlied; Abschied; Der Bettler	105				
Frühlingsglaube, Op 9 No 8	105				
Fughetta in D major	95				
Fugues – in E minor; in F minor	95				
Glosse 'Mitleids Worte, Trostesgründe'	105				
Gruss, 'O könnt' ich zu dir fliegen'	105				
Hüt dich	105				
Ich denke dein, wenn durch den Hain	105				
Lieder, Op 8 – Nos 7, 8 & 11	105				
Menuetto	91				
Nachspiel in D	95				
Octet, Op 20 (arr pf duet)	89				
Organ Sonatas, Op 65	95				
Passacaglia in C minor	95				
Rausche leise, grünes Dach	105				
Reiselied	105				
Seltsam, Mutter, geht es mir	105				
String Quartet No 1, Op 12	91				
String Quintet No 1, Op 18	91				
Symphony No 1, Op 11 (arr pf duet, vn & vc)	89				
Tanz dem Schönen Mai entgegen	105				
Three Preludes and Fugues, Op 37	95				
Warum sind denn die Rosen so blass?	105				
Messiaen					
Saint François d'Assise	120				
Monteverdi					
Il ballo delle ingrate	107				
Lamento d'Arianna	108				
Madrigals, Book 5 – Questi vaghi concetti; T'amo mia vita; Book 6 – Ohimè, dovè il mio ben?; Book 8 – Gira il nemico insidioso; Hor ch'el ciel e la terra	107				
Madrigals, Book 7 – Con che soavità	108				
La mia turca	108				
Ohimè ch'io cado	108				
Perché se m'odiavi	108				
Più lieto il guardo	108				
Scherzi musicali – Ecco di dolci raggi; Eri già tutta mia; Et è pur dunque vero; Maledetto sia l'aspetto; Quel sguardo sdegno	108				
Scherzi musicali – Zefiro torna	107				
Si dolce è'l tormento	107, 108				
Voglio di vita uscir	108				
Monti					
Czárda	93				
Mozart					
Ave verum corpus, K618	108				
Die Zauberflöte – Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön; Die Weisheitslehre dieser Knaben...	117				
Exultate, jubilate, K165	108				
Mass No 17, 'Coronation'	108				
Piano Concerto No 27	125				
Requiem	129				
Symphony No 29	125				
Vesperae solennes de confessore	108				
Musgrave					
Songs for a Winter's Evening	83				
Turbulent Landscapes	83				
Two's Company	83				
N					
Novák					
Capriccio for Cello and Orchestra	78				
O					
d'Orléans					
A volte	99				
P					
Palestrina					
Alma redemptoris mater	113				
Lamentationum Hieremiae liber tertius – Holy Saturday: Lectio I-III	113				
Missa Veni sponsa Christi	113				
Motets, Book 3 – Surge illuminare Jerusalem	113				
Pärt					
Darf ich...	128				
Da pacem Domine	93				
Hymn to a Great City	93				
Spiegel im Spiegel	86				
Perrichon					
Corant (Le Testament)	99				
Prokofiev					
Symphony No 1, 'Classical'	122				
Symphony-Concerto	78				
Puccini					
La bohème – Si, mi chiamano Mimi; Addio...Donde lieta	115				
Manon Lescaut – Sola perduta abbandonata	115				
La Rondine – Ore dolci e divine; Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso	115				
Suor Angelica – Senza mamma	115				
Turandot – Tu che di gel cinta	115				
R					
Rachmaninov					
Vocalise, Op 34 No 14	86				
Ravel					
Tzigane	86				
Rawsthorne					
Concerto No 1 for Piano, Strings and Percussion	74				
Reger					
Solo Viola Suites	95				
Ricci					
Corrado d'Altamura – highlights	114				
Roland					
Le cri du Bagnérais	111				
Rore					
I sacri et santi salmi di David Profeta – Magnificat a 6 toni	113				
Regina caeli laetare	113				
Rutter					
Requiem	129				
S					
Saint-Saëns					
Introduction and Rondo capriccioso	86				
Sammartini/Berteau					
Sonata, Op 1a No 3	91				
Sampson					
Psallite felices	109				
Quam pulcra est	109				
Salve radix	109				
Sarasate					
Zigeunerweisen, Op 20	86				
Schubert					
Alfonso und Estrella – Schon, wenn es beginnt zu tagen	117				
Fierrabras – Was quälst du mich, O Missgeschick!	117				
Impromptu, D899 No 2; D935 No 2	97				
Moment musical, D780 No 1	97				
Piano Sonatas – Nos 16 & 17	97				
Symphony No 8, 'Unfinished'	125				
Symphony No 9	122				
Schumann					
Abendlied	93				
Abends am Strand, Op 45 No 3	108				
Aus den hebräischen Gesängen	93				
Belsazar, Op 57	108				
Fantasiestücke, Op 12 – Nos 1, 2, 3, 5 & 8	97				
Fünf Lieder und Gesänge, Op 127 – Nos 2 & 3	108				
Humoreske, Op 20	97				
In der Fremde	93				
Liederkreis, Op 24	108				
Myrthen, Op 25	108				
Romanzen und Balladen III, Op 53 – Nos 3, 4 & 5	108				
Symphony No 3, 'Rhenish'	122				
Tragödie, Op 64 No 3	108				
Vier Gesänge, Op 142 – Nos 2 & 4	108				
Violin Sonatas – Nos 1 & 2	93				
Widmung	93				
Scotto					
Le cri du poilu	111				
Scriabin					
Albumblatt, Op 58	97				
Deux Danses, Op 73	97				
Deux Poèmes, Op 32	97				
Fantasy, Op 28	97				
Poème satanique, Op 36	97				
Poème tragique, Op 34	97				
Poème, Op 41	97				
Polonaise, Op 21	97				
Trois Morceaux, Op 52	97				
Vers la flamme, Op 72	97				
Waltzes – Op 1; Op 38; in D flat	97				
Sermisy					
Jouissance vous donneray	111				
Servin					
La fricassée des cris de Paris	111				
Shostakovich					
Hamlet – selection	85				
Symphonies – Nos 1 & 15	85				
Silvestrov					
25.X.1893...In memoriam PI Tchaikovsky – No 2, 'Lullaby'	93				
Ikon	93				
Strauss, R					
Arabella – He's not the one who's right for me; I am very glad	116				
Aus Italien	85				
Don Juan	85				
Don Quixote	85				
Stravinsky					
Petrushka	122				
Sturt					
A volte	99				
Szymanowski					
Violin Concerto No 1	75, 122				
Violin Concerto No 2	75				
T					
Tann					
Light from the Cliffs	99				
Tavener					
Ikon of Joy and Sorrow	93				
Taverner					
O Christe Jesu, pastor bone	109				
Tchaikovsky, PI					
Concert Fantasy	122				
Hamlet Overture	122				
Orchestral Suite No 4 – Theme and Variations	122				
The Queen of Spades – You need not close the windows just yet; It's nearly midnight now	116				
The Seasons – Nos 6, 11 & 12	97				
Sérénade mélancolique	125				
Symphony No 4	122, 125				
Symphonies – Nos 5 & 6	122				
Violin Concerto	125				
Tchaikovsky, B					
Four Josef Brodsky Poems	109				
From Kipling	109				
Lyrics of Pushkin	109				
Trio	109				
Two Mikhail Lermontov Poems	109				
Two Pieces for balalaika and piano	109				
Tcherepnin					
Solo Cello Suite	78				
Terradellas					
Artaserse	119				
Merope – Dono d'amica sorte non cura il mio valore; Dove si vide mai di me piu sventurata; Ah scellerato!... Un empio m'accusa; Sinfonia	119				
Sesostri re d'Egitto – Sinfonia; Solitudini amene; Spiega omai le placid'ali; Qual sventura e la mia; Se perde l'usignolo; Fra l'ombra del timore; Tremate, sì, tremate	119				
V					
Vaughan Williams					
The Lark Ascending	86				
Verdelot					
Nil majus superi vident	109				
Verdi					
Messa da Requiem	120, 129				
Victoria					
Requiem	129				
Vivaldi					
Argippo, RV697 – Se lento	109				
Bassoon Concertos – RV468; RV488	86				
Cello Sonata No 5, RV40	91				
Chamber Concerto, RV100	86				



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Sting

The multi million-selling artist on how the barriers are tumbling between genres

Luckily I was educated by the BBC, when there was only the Light Programme and Radio 3, so you'd hear the *1812 Overture* next to Kathy Kirby next to The Beatles – so you got the feeling that music was all one thing. Nowadays kids can listen to the same kind of thing all day – blues, heavy metal, reggae, classical music. It's all separate, ghettoised and I'm not sure how healthy that is.

My feeling is that music is a common language – obviously there's a difference between a folksong and Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto in terms of skill and application, but they use the same building blocks, so I've always had a healthy respect for classical music, and a desire to hear it and a desire to learn from it. I think that just by playing a Bach Prelude on, say, the guitar, you're sitting with the composer, you're seeing him make decisions. And with Bach you're sitting with a master – and of course you learn something! I can't say exactly what I've learnt (I can tell you what I've ripped off!) but that's what learning is. All composers steal from other composers. Bach is my

favourite composer. People say he's emotionless but I can't understand that. I find him incredibly emotional – the Solo Violin Sonatas and the Cello Suites I just can't get enough of. I love them. It's the beauty of mathematics, which I don't find cold at all, I find it fascinating. It's architecture in sound.

More and more I feel the barriers are coming down between classical musicians and pop or jazz musicians. We've all been educated in the same kind of way. I had Daniel Hope on my latest album and he's a concert violinist but he knows as much about pop music as I do. And having a foot in both camps really reinforces the fact that it is a common language. I just did a concert in Chicago with the Chicago Symphony, an hour and a half of my own songs in arrangements for orchestra. There are obviously differences and problems. One is volume – they're so loud, the brass in particular! And

the way we count time – symphonic time is very open-ended and expansive; it flows like the ocean. Pop music is very strict tempo, very metronomic. I kept watching the conductor and thinking "Where is '1'?", and it seems to be after he's hit the floor! So that was confusing.

I know what an incredible amount of effort it takes to write a symphony, but when you make an album – an hour, an hour and a half's worth of music – you do have a larger form in your head. The way you select songs, the way they move from one to the next, key centres and so on. So it definitely rubs off on you.

That experiment with the Chicago Symphony was very interesting – and I'm going to repeat it with the Philadelphia Orchestra in January. It's an interesting field and I suppose orchestras are keen to get people like me to work with them because it widens their demographic. The symphonic

audience is getting older, so I think it's important to broaden things without diluting what they do. To bring in a different kind of sensibility: that's the way art thrives and survives.

The *Twin Spirits* project [based on the letters of Robert and Clara Schumann, now on DVD] came about through our neighbour June Chichester who raises funds for the Royal Opera House. The mission is to try and bring all levels of society into the Opera House – it's always being accused of being elitist, and there's some truth to that. But opera means work. And here in Britain we don't produce very much but we do produce art, opera, music. So all levels of the community should be involved, whether it's dress-making, set-making and so the funds are used for that side of things.

The last opera I saw was Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* which I loved and the one before that was *The Magic Flute* – so the full gamut!

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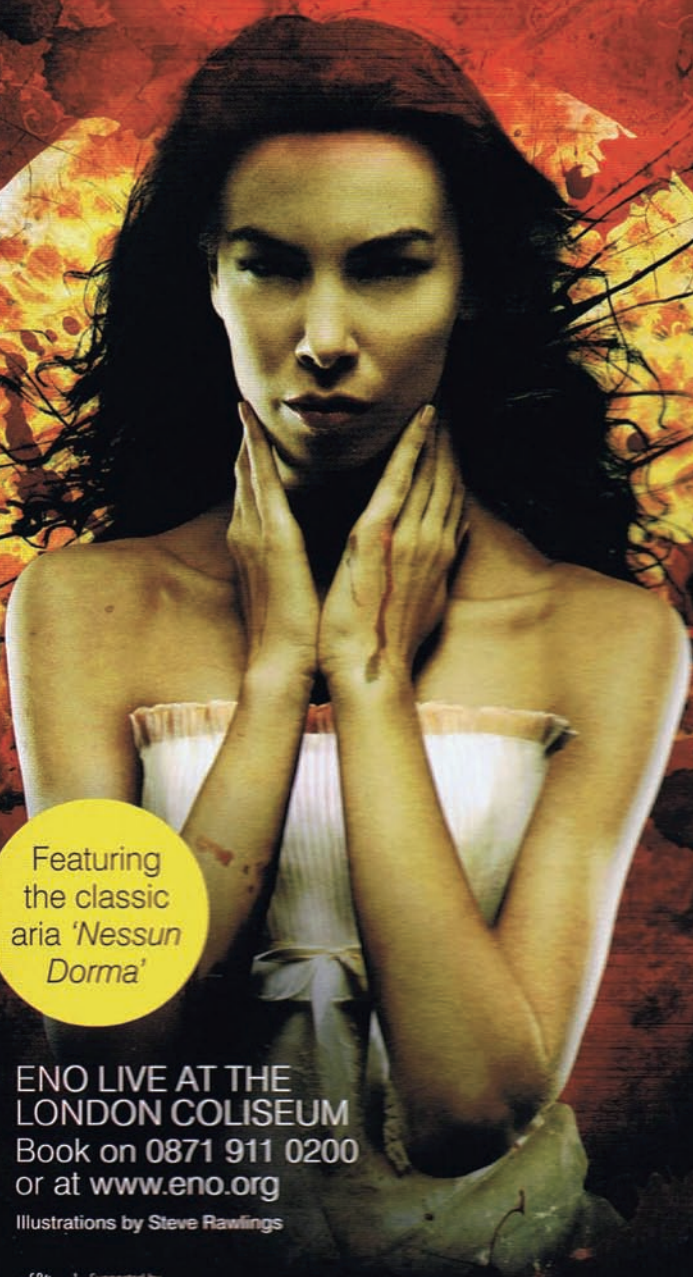
The DVD of 'Twin Spirits' with Sting, Trudie Styler, Simon Keenlyside, Rebecca Evans and others is reviewed on page 121

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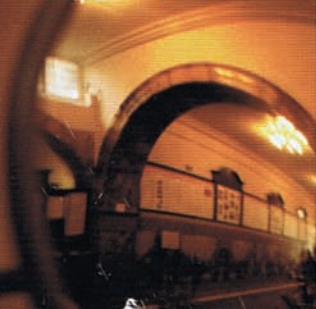
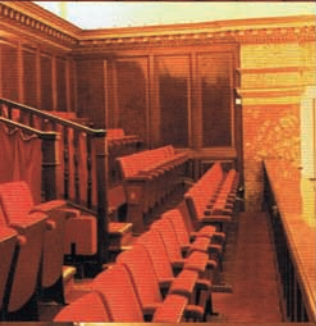
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